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*WPD301 08/16/2006

Ban of Legal Aid Center Raises Concern over Iran's Human Rights
(Tehran outlaws Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi's Center for Defense of Human Rights) (800)

By Lea Terhune
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - When the Iranian government notified the Center for Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) that it was illegal and that if its activities continued, members risked arrest, co-founder Shirin Ebadi responded with an international e-mail appeal for support.

Ebadi, a well-known lawyer, is the first Iranian and first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She founded the CDHR with a colleague, Abdulfatah Soltani, in 2001 to defend dissidents facing prosecution by the Iranian government. In her August 5 message, Ebadi said the center members "do not intend to shut down the center and we shall continue our activities. However, there is a high possibility that they will arrest us."

She has spent time in detention before, and her law partner, Soltani, spent most of the past year in Tehran's Evin prison. He was sentenced in July to five years for disclosing confidential information and for opposition to the regime. He is in the process of appealing the decision.

CDHR lawyers handle cases of dissidents who otherwise would be unable to defend themselves. According to Ebadi, "We defend political prisoners pro bono – about 70 percent of the political prisoners in Iran are clients of our center." They also give financial and moral support to their clients' families and report violations of human rights in the country.

The European Union and human rights monitors have noted the deterioration of human rights in Iran with concern. Human Rights Watch was one of several groups calling for Iran to fulfill its obligation to protect human rights workers under the 1998 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Defenders, which supports citizens' rights "to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms," to "discuss new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance" and challenge harmful government policies.

"Shirin Ebadi has fearlessly used her legal expertise to promote and protect fundamental human rights, equality and rule of law in Iran," said U.S. State Department official Erica Barks-Ruggles. "She has been

an inspiring voice advocating for the Iranian people.” Barks-Ruggles expressed alarm that the Iranian government would seek to “constrain [Ebadi’s] efforts to ensure all Iranians have a voice.”

Incidents in past months have heightened concerns about human rights in Iran. The July death of jailed dissident Akbar Mohammadi in Evin prison aroused suspicions. Amnesty International maintains his poor health was the result of torture, and said it is “strongly indicated” that “repeated delays or outright denial of medical care” contributed to Mohammadi’s death. Iranian Justice Minister Jamal Karimirad told Reuters that he had been under “intense” medical supervision but “his health condition deteriorated.”

In June, Iranian Prosecutor-General Saeed Mortazavi, seen by many as responsible for systematic civil and human rights abuses, was appointed to a delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. At the time Human Rights Watch researcher Hadi Ghaemi wrote that Mortazavi “has prosecuted scores of Iranian human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents, students and activists, and he is alleged to be implicated directly in acts of murder, torture, arbitrary detention and coercing false confessions.”

Police also cracked down on an International Women’s Day gathering March 8. They beat up participants, several hundred of whom assembled in Tehran for a peaceful show of solidarity with the international women’s rights movement. A police official told the Iranian Labor News Agency that the gathering was held without official permit and the police action “prevented the gathering to take on a political dimension.” Shirin Ebadi is defending some of the participants.

Many Iranian student activists and authors of Internet Web logs, or bloggers, are held in jails. Among them are Mojtaba Saemi Nejad, Arash Cigarchi, Abed Tavanche and Omid Abbas Gholinejad. Journalists are at high risk of arrest. Reporters Without Borders calls Iran “the Middle East’s biggest prison for journalists and bloggers” in its 2006 annual report. Imprisoned journalists include Ali Hamed Iman, Elham Foroutan and Mohsen Dorostkar. Internationally respected scholar Ramin Jahanbegloo remains in jail, as does Yashar Ghajar, the head of the Islamic Institute of Amir Kabir University. After paying a high bail, labor leader Mansoor Osanloo was released from prison August 9. Human rights advocates lauded his release while renewing calls for the Iranian government to respect the rights of its citizens.

Calling the action against the CDHR a “huge setback” on that score, Sarah Lea Whitson of Human Rights Watch said, “If Ebadi is threatened for defending human rights, then no one who works for human rights can escape government prosecution.” Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003.

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*WPD302 08/16/2006

Al-Qaida in Iraq Incites Sectarian Violence, Says U.S. General
(Iraqi security forces continue expansion of Baghdad operations) (900)

By David McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Remnants of al-Qaida in Iraq are among the “primary instigators” of the rising tide of sectarian violence, says a top spokesman for Multi-National Force – Iraq.

“Al-Qaida in Iraq realizes [the] killing of innocent Iraqi civilians has damaged their public support,” U.S. Army Major General William Caldwell told journalists at an August 16 press briefing in Baghdad, Iraq.

Al-Qaida in Iraq long has sought to foment sectarian violence but has faced several setbacks, most notably the death of founding leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Jun/12-735280.html>).)

In addition, more than 160 members of its leadership have been killed or captured in the past year as Iraqi security forces and their coalition allies work to dismantle the terrorist network. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=May&x=20060505173450idybeekcm0.2043573&t=is/is-latest.html>).)

Several detained al-Qaida in Iraq members now are cooperating with authorities and providing valuable intelligence, Caldwell said. These detainees report that al-Qaida in Iraq is trying to counter its shrinking numbers by tightening links with Iraq's Sunni militants, recruiting more Iraqi citizens while using fewer foreign fighters and mounting a massive propaganda effort to portray al-Qaida in Iraq as a political organization.

"Al-Qaida in Iraq is making a concerted effort to gain legitimacy by marketing itself to the Iraqi people as a credible, helpful organization that appeals to Iraqis in desperate social and economic situations," Caldwell said. "Their primary goal in discrediting the government of Iraq is the expulsion of the U.S.," which would remove the security support the fledgling democracy needs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060802173347idybeekcm0.5907099>).)

"By no means does it mean they intend to stop creating sectarian violence," he added, "but rather change the perception."

Caldwell said Iraqi and coalition forces continue to work closely to establish peace and security throughout the country on behalf of a united Iraq.

CALDWELL REPORTS PROGRESS IN BAGHDAD SECURITY OPERATIONS

"The core conflict in Iraq," said Caldwell, "has transitioned to a struggle mostly between Sunni and Shi'a extremists seeking to control key areas of Baghdad, create or protect sectarian enclaves, divert economic resources and impose their political and religious agendas." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060805145001tneweolc0.6744959>).)

Under "Operation Together Forward" Iraqi forces, supported by their coalition allies, continue to expand their influence in the capital, confront the extremists and provide safety and stability for area residents, he said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060809173744idybeekcm0.1926538>).)

"Abating the extremists in the capital will neither be easy nor rapid," Caldwell said. "Challenges will ensue, but efforts will march forward block by block."

Iraqi security forces are conducting targeted "search-and-clear" operations in Baghdad's most violent neighborhoods to get illegal weapons off the streets, identify extremists and deny safe haven, he added. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060724165025idybeekcm0.3906824>).)

Since the implementation of the Baghdad security plan, he said, Iraqi and coalition forces have searched more than 7,000 homes and businesses, as well as 19 mosques. They have seized nearly 300 unauthorized weapons and detained 47 individuals with alleged ties to sectarian violence.

The week of August 14, Caldwell reported, Iraqi and coalition forces also began new security sweeps in Baghdad's Dura district and extended operations into Karmiyah and Mansour, in western Baghdad.

"We are cautiously optimistic as we execute the Baghdad security operations," Caldwell said, adding that, thanks to efforts by Iraqi army and police units, "All across Baghdad, we are seeing progress."

FORCES SUPPORTING RESTORATION OF LOCAL SERVICES

Another cause for optimism, Caldwell said, is the progress made by Iraqi and coalition forces in building partnerships with local leaders in Baghdad's Dura, Shula and Amariyah neighborhoods.

Together, they are forming district advisory councils aimed at employing area residents to clean neighborhoods, repair and rebuild key infrastructure and restore basic services to their communities.

"The district advisory council chairman is pushing members to take responsibility and to help clean up their neighborhoods," he said.

Caldwell highlighted the positive effect of the district advisory council in Dura, where until recently locals experienced 20 to 30 violent incidents a week. Local officials met with Iraqi and coalition forces to discuss actions to improve security, beginning with the installation of a network of barriers and checkpoints to keep would-be attackers out.

Now more than 700 Dura residents are employed in cleanup and rebuilding projects in the area, and more than 900 tons of trash has been removed, Caldwell said. Iraqi and coalition forces have distributed aid packages and are supporting the formation of medical assistance teams to help the community's most vulnerable residents. While much work remains for Dura, improved security and efforts by the district advisory council have resulted in shops reopening and people returning to the streets, he said.

Caldwell predicted the initiative would spread gradually to other districts in the capital and would prove a key component in providing stability and relief from the violence for area residents.

"We have a positive trend happening," Caldwell said, "but it is the will of the Iraqi people that is needed to carry this momentum." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060815164033idybeekcm0.3861048>).)

A transcript (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2173&Itemid=30), briefing slides (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/stories/Press_briefings/2006/Aug/060816.pdf) (PDF, 8 pages), and video link (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2173&Itemid=30) to Caldwell's briefing are available from the Multi-National Force – Iraq (http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) Web site.

For more information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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*WPD303 08/16/2006

U.S. Pledges Additional \$20 Million Humanitarian Aid to Lebanon
(Aid shipments begin to reach isolated southern villages) (550)

By Steve Kaufman and Lea Terhune
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- Aid is reaching areas in southern Lebanon that need it most, as the cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah remains stable. Deliveries of humanitarian supplies stalled by the conflict, including nearly \$30 million of the initial U.S. aid commitment, are reaching thousands of displaced Lebanese.

Aid agencies, along with a flood of returning refugees, travel over broken roads to bring supplies and assess the situation. Operations Director for Medicins Sans Frontieres Christopher Stokes told Reuters,

"There's two kinds of people who need help now: those who stayed behind and couldn't leave during the fighting, and those arriving back."

At the White House, press secretary Tony Snow told reporters August 16 that the United States and the members of the international community, including Saudi Arabia and Iraq, already have pledged \$425 million to help with Lebanon's reconstruction, and that \$24 million of the \$30 million pledged by the United States for humanitarian relief is already on the ground and available for use.

"We've made commitments strictly on the humanitarian side. There is a separate pot of money ... for reconstruction" that will be discussed by the United States and other countries at an August 31 donors conference, Snow said.

Snow drew attention to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's commitment of an additional \$20 million of humanitarian aid to Lebanon. She made the announcement at the United Nations Security Council August 11 as a response to "overwhelming suffering, and heartache, and loss."

In an August 16 op-ed in the Washington Post, Rice said the aid is "a first step," designed to help the Lebanese people "emerge from this conflict with more opportunities and greater prosperity."

"Looking ahead, our most pressing challenge is to help the hundreds of thousands of displaced people within Lebanon to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. This reconstruction effort will be led by the government of Lebanon, but it will demand the generosity of the whole world," she said. (See op-ed (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060816122957eaifas0.1131403>).)

Currently, the U.S. relief assistance is being funneled through the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organization and World Food Program. Nongovernmental organizations Mercy Corps, Catholic Relief Services and the International Medical Corps also are involved.

The World Food Program said it sent 19 trucks to Hasbaya in the southeast. A ship loaded with food and relief supplies was sent from Beirut to Tyre. A large convoy from Syria and supplies airlifted from Jordan were slated for delivery August 16.

Meanwhile, people are streaming back to their homes in the south. U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees spokeswoman Astrid van Genderen Stort said, "An enormous amount of people are moving. To meet their needs, we have 50,000 tents, 270,000 mattresses and blankets and other supplies in the pipeline."

A danger to people returning to what remains of their homes and complicating the aid distribution process is the large quantity of unexploded ordnance. The United States is working with the United Nations and the Lebanese army to distribute ordinance awareness leaflets throughout the area.

For additional information, see The Middle East: A Vision for the Future (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html).

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*WPD304 08/16/2006
Journalists Launch First National News Agency in Iraq
(Partnership for a Better Life) (310)

As media outlets in Iraq proliferated, a group of Iraqi journalists recognized a need for a professional, nationwide news agency. With assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID),

in October 2005, the group launched the National Iraqi News Agency (NINA). The new agency's goal is to help Iraqi media outlets provide audiences with impartial, accurate information.

"Iraq needs an independent, professional news agency," said Dr. Ayer, a veteran reporter and co-founder of NINA. "Creating NINA is a challenge, but we believe the agency will grow and become a service very needed by the media."

Iraq's first independent news agency offers news and features that describe in Arabic the country's political, economic and social life. The agency is striving to become synonymous with fair, honest and reliable reporting that Iraqis can trust amid a media landscape overflowing with information -- some unverifiable.

The media professionals who own and operate NINA have been consulting with international news agency managers as they build their own agency. USAID has provided technical assistance and has been helping NINA journalists boost their writing and editing skills, and learn international media standards. USAID also equipped the agency's headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, with the latest news collection, editing and transmission equipment.

NINA has hired full-time correspondents in Erbil, Hilla Basra and the International Zone in Baghdad, as well as freelance reporters in other parts of the country.

The agency is an important part of USAID's efforts to help strengthen independent media in Iraq with the goal of developing media outlets throughout the country able to provide accurate, high-quality information.

Through training and business development assistance, as well as media law advocacy, USAID is building the foundation for an independent, credible media to grow and flourish in Iraq.

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*WPD305 08/16/2006

Rice Expects Hezbollah To Disarm or Face International Pressure
(Lebanese government to draft political agreement with militants) (690)

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – If Hezbollah refuses to cooperate with the Lebanese government and disarm, both the militant organization and its foreign sponsors will face isolation from the international community, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"[T]his time, we'll make it very clear; if there is resistance to the obligations that the Lebanese government has undertaken, then there will be a problem and Hezbollah will have to face the international community and Hezbollah supporters will have to face the international community," Rice told USA Today August 15. She specified that by "Hezbollah supporters," she means Syria and Iran.

Under the terms of U.N. Security Council resolution 1701, which brought an end to a month of fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, the Lebanese government is expected to deploy 15,000 troops to Hezbollah's stronghold in southern Lebanon alongside an enhanced U.N. peacekeeping force of 15,000 troops. The resolution also states that there should be no independent armed groups in Lebanon outside of government security forces. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060815152029ndyblehs0.5140802>).)

Rice explained that the U.N. forces would not be involved directly in disarming Hezbollah. "You have to have a plan, first of all, for the disarmament of a militia, and then the hope is that some people lay down their arms voluntarily," she said. "[T]he disarmament of militias is essentially a political agreement and the Lebanese government has said that it intends to live up to its obligations under Resolution 1559 and something called the Taif Accords, which was signed in 1989 in Saudi Arabia."

Security Council resolution 1559, adopted in 2004, and the Taif Accords, which put an end to Lebanon's 15-year civil war, both called for the disarming of all militias, but Hezbollah continually has resisted those long-standing demands.

"Now we will see whether Hezbollah, which ... after all, has ministers in the Lebanese government, is prepared to live up to those international obligations. We will see who is for peace and who isn't," Rice said.

She said Hezbollah's presence in the Lebanese government makes the group's responsibilities to that government and to the government's international obligations clearer and more difficult to resist. If Hezbollah does resist, she said, the group would come under tremendous international pressure, particularly from the European community, which has yet to designate the group as a terrorist organization, but might do so if it refuses to cooperate.

Rice outlined considerations that would make it difficult for Hezbollah to resist the government's demands. She said Hezbollah is in a much weaker position now than it was a month ago. She said its military capabilities have been degraded, and that the international arms embargo imposed by resolution 1701 will make it difficult for the group to rearm. She also said the deployment of the Lebanese army and U.N. forces to the south will dislodge the group from its strategic positions along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

The secretary expressed doubt that Hezbollah's actions during the monthlong conflict with Israel would be viewed as successful in the long term.

"[E]xactly what did they achieve? They achieved the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese. They achieved the destruction of Lebanese infrastructure and housing and neighborhoods. They achieved ... what has not been achieved before, the movement of the Lebanese army into the south to displace them with an international force that this time will be robust enough to defend its mandate. That's what they achieved. Now perhaps that stands as a great achievement for Hezbollah. I would submit it doesn't," she said. "I would suggest that when the dust clears, Hezbollah has a lot to answer for."

In contrast, Rice praised Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora for his dignity and strength in dealing with the crisis. "Prime Minister Siniora is someone who, with great dignity and great aplomb, has led his people out of that terrible situation, not of his own making, to, I think, an international standing that is quite remarkable," she said.

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*WPD306 08/16/2006

Text: U.N. Resolution Charts Path to Peace in Lebanon, Rice Says
(Secretary of state calls on all nations to help Lebanon rebuild) (920)

The following op-ed article by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was published in the August 16 edition of The Washington Post. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin text)

A Path To Lasting Peace
By Condoleezza Rice

For the past month the United States has worked urgently to end the violence that Hezbollah and its sponsors have imposed on the people of Lebanon and Israel. At the same time, we have insisted that a truly effective cease-fire requires a decisive change from the status quo that produced this war. Last Friday (August 11) we took an important step toward that goal with the unanimous passage of U.N. Resolution 1701. Now the difficult, critical task of implementation begins.

The agreement we reached has three essential components:

First, it puts in place a full cessation of hostilities. We also insisted on the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers. Hezbollah must immediately cease its attacks on Israel, and Israel must halt its offensive military operations in Lebanon, while reserving the right of any sovereign state to defend itself. This agreement went into effect on Monday, after the Israeli and Lebanese cabinets agreed to its conditions.

Second, this resolution will help the democratic government of Lebanon expand its sovereign authority. The international community is imposing an embargo on all weapons heading into Lebanon without the government's consent. We are also enhancing UNIFIL, the current U.N. force in Lebanon. The new UNIFIL will have a robust mandate, better equipment and as many as 15,000 soldiers -- a sevenfold increase from its current strength. Together with this new international force, the Lebanese Armed Forces will deploy to the south of the country to protect the Lebanese people and prevent armed groups such as Hezbollah from destabilizing the area. As this deployment occurs, Israel will withdraw behind the "Blue Line" and a permanent cease-fire will take hold.

Finally, this resolution clearly lays out the political principles to secure a lasting peace: no foreign forces, no weapons and no authority in Lebanon other than that of the sovereign Lebanese government. These principles represent a long-standing international consensus that has been affirmed and reaffirmed for decades -- but never fully implemented. Now, for the first time, the international community has put its full weight behind a practical political framework to help the Lebanese government realize these principles, including the disarmament of all militias operating on its territory.

The implementation of Resolution 1701 will not only benefit Lebanon and Israel; it also has important regional implications. Simply put: This is a victory for all who are committed to moderation and democracy in the Middle East -- and a defeat for those who wish to undermine these principles with violence, particularly the governments of Syria and Iran.

While the entire world has spent the past month working for peace, the Syrian and Iranian regimes have sought to prolong and intensify the war that Hezbollah started. The last time this happened, 10 years ago, the United States brokered a cease-fire between Israel and Syria. The game of diplomacy was played by others, over the heads of the Lebanese. Now Syria no longer occupies Lebanon, and the international community is helping the Lebanese government create the conditions of lasting peace -- full independence, complete sovereignty, effective democracy and a weakened Hezbollah with fewer opportunities to rearm and regroup. Once implemented, this will be a strategic setback for the Syrian and Iranian regimes.

The agreement we reached last week is a good first step, but it is only a first step. Though we hope that it will lead to a permanent cease-fire, no one should expect an immediate stop to all acts of violence. This is a fragile cease-fire, and all parties must work to strengthen it. Our diplomacy has helped end a war. Now comes the long, hard work to secure the peace.

Looking ahead, our most pressing challenge is to help the hundreds of thousands of displaced people within Lebanon to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. This reconstruction effort will be led by the government of Lebanon, but it will demand the generosity of the entire world.

For our part, the United States is helping to lead relief efforts for the people of Lebanon, and we will fully support them as they rebuild their country. As a first step, we have increased our immediate humanitarian assistance to \$50 million. To secure the gains of peace, the Lebanese people must emerge from this conflict with more opportunities and greater prosperity.

Already, we hear Hezbollah trying to claim victory. But others, in Lebanon and across the region, are asking themselves what Hezbollah's extremism has really achieved: hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes. Houses and infrastructure destroyed. Hundreds of innocent lives lost. The blame of the world for causing this war.

Innocent people in Lebanon, in Israel and across the Middle East have suffered long enough at the hands of extremists. It is time to overcome old patterns of violence and secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. This is our goal, and now we have laid out the steps to achieve it. Our policy is ambitious, yes, and difficult to achieve. But it is right. It is realistic. And ultimately, it is the only effective path to a more hopeful future.

(The writer is secretary of state.)

(end text)

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*WPD307 08/16/2006

Text: Strategies for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Kenya

(Kenyan, U.S. AIDS officials explain a multifaceted plan for disease prevention) (860)

The following op-ed, co-authored by Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed, director of Kenya's National AIDS/STI [sexually transmitted infections] Control Program, and Dr. Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, appeared in the Toronto Star August 16, 2006. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin text)

The ABCs of Kenya's War on AIDS

By Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed and Dr. Mark Dybul

The challenges of HIV/AIDS prevention in the developing world are daunting. To turn back the rising tide of infection, we need a public health approach that respects the people we serve so they can make their own decisions.

The HIV/AIDS strategy of the government of Kenya emphasizes an evidence-based approach rooted in "ABC: " Abstain, Be faithful, and the Correct and Consistent use of Condoms. Americans, through President George W. Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, support Kenya's prevention strategy.

In much of Africa, HIV/AIDS is a generalized epidemic affecting all age groups and segments of society.

A comprehensive approach is needed to combat a generalized epidemic.

The evidence is clear -- in such an epidemic, all three components of ABC are essential to combat HIV/AIDS. In concentrated epidemics -- Thailand and Brazil, for example --more targeted approaches can be effective.

The Kenyan health ministry estimates that HIV prevalence has dropped markedly from 1998 to 2003. While the causes are complex, the data point to:

? Increased male faithfulness - among men aged 20 to 24, the percentage who reported more than one sexual partner dropped from more than 35 per cent to 18 per cent.

? Delayed sexual debut, with median age for first sex among women rising from 16.7 years of age to 17.8.

? High levels of both primary and secondary abstinence (people who were sexually active who have abstained for at least one year) in teenagers of both sexes.

? Increased condom use among women who engage in risky activity.

Similarly, a study published this year in the journal Science reported sharp declines in HIV prevalence in eastern Zimbabwe, associated with striking changes in sexual behaviour.

As Dr. Peter Piot, head of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, remarked, "[T]he declines in HIV rates have been due to changes in behavior, including increased use of condoms, people delaying the first time they have sexual intercourse, and people having fewer sexual partners."

In other words, the ABC behaviors.

As data from these and other nations such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi and South Africa demonstrate, ABC is good public health.

It also respects local culture - ABC was developed in Africa, not in North America - and respects the people whom we serve.

To focus programs on only one component of ABC would be dangerous and patronizing, reflecting an assumption that intelligent people who care about themselves and their families cannot make decisions for themselves.

ABC provides hard data so people can decide how to protect themselves: the only 100 per cent effective way to avoid HIV is to abstain or to be faithful to a single, HIV-negative partner, while correct and consistent use of condoms reduces risk by approximately 90 per cent.

With that knowledge, if one chooses risky behavior, condoms must be made available to that person.

Kenyan policy promotes the common sense, public health approach of ABC, which the U.S. government supports throughout the world.

In generalized epidemics, however, other interventions, in addition to ABC, are needed.

The Kenyan strategy recognizes this by promoting programs to minimize gender inequality, which often makes it difficult for women to negotiate A, B or C.

Kenya is also increasing HIV counseling and testing to ensure that HIV-negative couples maintain fidelity and that HIV-discordant couples [one positive and one negative partner] receive counseling and condoms.

Beyond sexual transmission, Kenya is focusing on prevention of mother-to-child transmission, blood safety, safe medical injections and other key issues.

The U.S. government supports this comprehensive approach to prevention in generalized epidemics in Kenya and many other countries.

Treating people with respect by providing them with HIV prevention education and services is good public health. It fosters the democratic value of personal responsibility that leads to healthy behaviors.

The governments of Kenya and the United States, together with our partners in civil society, will remain committed to providing people with the information and tools they need to protect themselves from HIV infection.

As Kenya is demonstrating, only a comprehensive, public health approach will turn the tide against HIV/AIDS.

For more information, please visit the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator's (<http://www.state.gov/s/gac>) Web site, or contact the Coordinator's office by phone (202) 663-2802 or e-mail PughKA@state.gov (<mailto:PughKA@state.gov>).

President George W. Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is the largest commitment ever by a single nation toward an international health initiative -- a five-year, \$15 billion, multifaceted approach to combating the disease in more than 120 countries around the world.

(Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed is director of Kenya's National AIDS/STI Control Program. Dr. Mark Dybul is U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.)

(end text)

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*WPD308 08/16/2006

U.S. Study Links Global Warming, Hurricane Intensity
(Implications for life, property in Caribbean, Mexico, parts of United States) (470)

Washington -- Climate change is affecting the intensity of Atlantic hurricanes, and hurricane damage likely will continue to increase because of greenhouse warming, according to a new study funded in part by the U.S. National Science Foundation.

The study shows for the first time a direct relationship between climate change and hurricane intensity, unlike other studies that have linked warmer oceans to a likely increase in the number of hurricanes, according to an August 15 press release from the American Geophysical Union (AGU). (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060808134042lcniellep0.7626459>).)

James Elsner of Florida State University examined the statistical connection between the average global near-surface air temperature and Atlantic sea surface temperature, comparing the two factors with hurricane intensities over the past 50 years.

"The large increases in powerful hurricanes over the past several decades, together with the results presented here, certainly suggest cause for concern," Elsner said.

He found that average air temperatures during hurricane season between June and November are useful in predicting sea surface temperatures -- a vital component in nourishing hurricane winds as they strengthen over warm waters -- but sea surface temperatures are not useful in predicting air temperatures.

Several recent studies have warned that human-induced climate warming has the potential to increase the number of hurricanes, and previous research and computer models suggest that hurricane strength will intensify with increasing global mean temperatures.

Others hypothesize that the relationship between sea surface temperatures and hurricanes can be attributed to natural causes, such as the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation, an ongoing series of long-term changes in the sea surface temperature of the North Atlantic Ocean.

Using detailed data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration to monitor sea temperature anomalies over the past half century, Elsner used a special test to establish evidence in support of the climate change/hurricane intensity hypothesis.

The World Meteorological Organization and the U.N. Environment Programme established the IPCC to assess scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant to the understanding of climate change, its impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Elsner's analysis helps verify a link between atmospheric warming caused largely by greenhouse gases and the recent upswing in frequency and intensity of Atlantic hurricanes, including Katrina and Rita, which devastated parts of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas in 2005.

"I infer that future hurricane hazard mitigation efforts should reflect that hurricane damage will continue to increase, in part, due to greenhouse warming," Elsner said.

Elsner said his research moves "the debate away from trend analyses of hurricane counts and toward a physical mechanism that can account for the various observations."

The text of the press release (http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/prll/prll0629.html) is available at the AGU Web site.

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*WPD309 08/16/2006

Judicial Independence and Rule of Law Essential, Judges Say
(International panel discusses importance of maintaining impartial courts) (440)

By Michelle Austein
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – "The best hope of living in peace and prosperity in the world today is if all nations abide by the notion of the rule of law," said Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor August 14. "Laws properly adopted by a country must be applied, interpreted and enforced by an independent judiciary," O'Connor told a panel of judges in Islamabad Pakistan using video conferencing.

Judges must be able to enforce laws, even in the face of political opposition, O'Connor said. They must be free to render fair and impartial judgments without fear of retaliation by other branches of government, she said.

At the same multinational panel, Honorable Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry said that judicial independence is an essential element of a nation practicing good governance.

The panel discussion featuring sitting and former judges from several countries was part of a four-day international judicial conference. The 91 participants from 43 countries, including 20 sitting chief justices, discussed common issues and shared ideas about judicial roles and powers.

O'Connor said it is vitally important that lawyers and judges "speak out in support of the concept of independence of the judiciary and that they help us maintain it and retain it and apply it."

Judge Robert Henry of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, also speaking via video, encouraged judges to discuss the issues they commonly share, including tenure, resources, executive branch support and such internal problems as corruption.

"It is very important for judges around the world to come together to exchange thoughts, exchange commentary ... and to exchange tactics with each other for how we deal with these problems," Henry said.

From the day they are appointed, judges, whether appointed to a lower court or the Supreme Court, must be independent, impartial and maintain no personal interest in a case, Chaudhry said. O'Connor added that judges must be bound to high ethical standards and be subject to discipline for violating these standards.

One of the biggest concerns the judges mentioned was corruption. Controlling judges' corruption is one of the most important ways to ensure the independence of the judiciary, Chaudhry said. Many of Pakistan's courts enforce a judges' code of conduct to help fight corruption, he said.

The conference coincided with the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's Supreme Court. See the Supreme Court of Pakistan's (<http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/>) Web site for more information.

More information about judicial independence is available on the Democracy Dialogues Independent Courts (http://www.democracy.gov/dd/eng_democracy_dialogues/independent_courts.html) Web site.

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*WPD310 08/16/2006

Montenegrin Villagers Celebrate Rebuilt Community Center
(Partnership for a Better Life) (350)

Community development councils are helping lead local development projects in Montenegro.

"This magnificent structure was literally built from the ashes," said Ljubo Vujadinovic, proudly pointing to his area's new multipurpose community center.

Vujadinovic lives in the picturesque Montenegrin village of Rastovac. His village and 12 others constitute the area of Vidrovan, an agricultural district. Residents vividly recall when their old community center, where they would gather for meetings, socializing and recreation, went up in flames 10 years ago.

The center's reconstruction was possible thanks to the Vidrovan Community Development Council. The council serves as a vehicle for uniting neighbors in pursuit of common goals. Rural councils like the one in Vidrovan are particularly effective in encouraging communication between distant neighbors and prioritizing redevelopment projects. Organized with the help of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Vidrovan council has implemented five community projects in three years.

Once the council had identified rebuilding the community center as a priority and committed to the project, it set about securing funding. USAID provided more than two-thirds of the \$229,000 project cost. The

Vidrován community, in partnership with the Montenegrin government's Public Works Directorate, the local municipality and the council, provided the rest.

Vujadinovic explained that the modern facility significantly would improve the quality of life in his region. "Within the center there are some completely new amenities, including an equipped gym," he said.

The center can host local community meetings, cultural events and sports activities. It also houses an agricultural pharmacy to meet the needs of Vidrován's farmers. The center will create at least seven new jobs.

"That is what we needed," said Vujadinovic. "Young, educated people will want to stay in Vidrován now instead of finding their happiness somewhere else."

A grocery store, as well as a walk-in medical clinic or dentist's office, is expected to open soon.

The only flame that sometimes flickers in the community center now, according to Vujadinovic, comes from the fierce rivalry with the neighboring village's basketball team.

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*WPD311 08/16/2006

U.S. Welcomes Cooperative Inquiry of New Balkans War Videos
(War crimes alleged against Serbs during Operation Storm in summer of 1995) (510)

By Vince Crawley
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Serbian television has aired videos of alleged atrocities by Croat and Bosnian troops in 1995, and the United States has welcomed investigations by the former warring parties, saying individuals rather than groups should be held accountable for any war crimes.

"The United States condemns all war crimes committed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, regardless of the ethnic or religious identity of the victim or perpetrator," acting State Department spokesman Gonzalo R. Gallegos said in a statement August 16.

"We welcome the fact that the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia are cooperating on an investigation into the acts depicted in the recently aired video footage allegedly from Operation Storm," Gallegos said, "and we encourage them to complete their work as rapidly as possible."

Operation Storm took place in August and September 1995. During the final weeks of the Bosnian war, Croat military forces coordinated with Bosnian forces to recapture the Krijina, an ethnic Serb region of central Croatia that had declared itself to be a separate republic during the wars of 1991-1995. The Croatian government regained control of the territory, and an estimated 200,000 ethnic Serbs fled their homes and became refugees in Bosnia or Serbia. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Dec/14-752997.html>).)

Video taken during the operation has been made public by Serbian television in recent days, apparently released by an unknown source in connection with the 11th anniversary of Operation Storm. One tape reportedly shows Croat and Bosnian troops harassing and attacking convoys of Serb refugees, in one scene killing a Serb who has surrendered. Another tape shows a prominent Bosnian general apparently ordering his troops to burn Serb villages.

Authorities say the tapes show new evidence of war crimes committed against Serbs. Bosnian authorities have renewed their 11-year-old call for ethnic Serbs to hand over Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, wartime Bosnian Serb leaders who have been indicted for war crimes, including mass murders in Srebrenica, Bosnia. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is not opening any new cases, so any newly discovered war crimes would have to be investigated and tried by local authorities. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Jun/18-562417.html>).)

"Atrocities were committed by all sides of the conflicts with varying levels of planning and organization, and we condemn any attempts to exploit these tragedies for political advantage," the State Department's Gallegos said.

"We continue to urge the governments in the region to investigate all allegations of war crimes, to prosecute those responsible, and to cooperate with other regional governments to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice," Gallegos said.

"Holding individuals accountable for these crimes, and moving beyond collectivization of guilt of entire groups," Gallegos said, "is vital to ensuring stability, security and reconciliation in the region."

The text (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/70844.htm>) of Gallegos' statement is posted on the State Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy in the region, see Southeast Europe (http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/balkans.html).

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*WPD312 08/16/2006

Public, Private Sectors Unite To Turn Senegal Dump into Park
(Partnership for a Better Life) (380)

What once was a filthy, foul-smelling trash heap in Dakar, Senegal, frequented by drug users has become a green and airy park that people come out to enjoy every day. Residents of the city's central district of Sicap owe this transformation to a few clever businessmen and savvy local authorities who, with assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), quickly realized the benefits of working together.

"Before, you couldn't even breathe here because of the trash," said Pape Mesta Anne, general secretary of Sicap's local development committee. For years, everyone avoided the city-block-size area.

This began to change when USAID started working with local associations, elected officials, religious leaders and residents to develop a five-year plan (through 2009) for the area. One of the planning group's recommendations was to make unused public spaces useful.

The Sicap district government worked out a deal with a local butchery, La Belle Viande, in which Sicap provided land for butcher and fast food shops. In exchange, the shops agreed to spruce up the public spaces surrounding their new establishments. This provided residents with easier access to the shops, as well as safer recreational areas for their families. The arrangement has worked well for La Belle Viande, its customers and the community at large.

Another big draw to the area has been a new basketball court -- the only one for miles around -- set up by La Belle Viande. "Kids are out here playing all the time, sometimes even at night, because there are lights," said Mame Ngone Seck, as a teenager with his orange ball strolled in to where Seck worked as a short-order cook.

"Creating this park is good for the people who saw the garbage that was piled up here before. Now there are public benches and the neighbors come out to buy their dinner.

"This is a good example of partnership," he added. "We have to approach the private sector because we need businesses here."

Mesta Anne said that Prime Minister Macky Sall saw Sicap's local development plan and suggested that other districts follow Sicap's lead and bring the private sector into their development plans.

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*WPD313 08/16/2006

President Bush To Meet With South Korea's President

(Trade agreement negotiations, security issues will be priorities) (460)

By Jane Morse

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Trade and security issues will top the agenda when South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun visits President Bush at the White House September 14.

According to an August 16 press release from the White House, the presidents will review progress in relations since their last bilateral meeting, which took place in South Korea on the eve of the November 2005 Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Priority topics for the upcoming meeting in Washington will include negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) and the Six-Party Talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which involve the United States, South Korea, North Korea, China, Japan and Russia.

"The two leaders will also discuss critical regional and global issues, including winning the war on terror, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting an open international economic order," the White House said.

At the completion of their November 17, 2005, summit meeting in South Korea's historic city of Gyeongju, Bush and Roh issued a joint declaration in which they reaffirmed the strength of the bilateral alliance and agreed that resolution of issues related to nuclear programs in North Korea is essential for establishing durable peace on the Korean Peninsula. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/Nov/17-779005.html>).)

In their declaration, the presidents stressed that "a nuclear-armed North Korea will not be tolerated" and called for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through diplomatic means. They urged North Korea to eliminate its nuclear weapons programs "promptly and verifiably."

They also expressed satisfaction with the "steady development" of relations between the United States and South Korea, noting force realignment agreements that will relocate and consolidate U.S. troops south of the Han River, including U.S. forces based at the Yongsan Garrison in the South Korean capital, Seoul.

As part of their declaration, the presidents agreed to launch a ministerial-level strategic dialogue, the Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership (SCAP), for consultations on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The two countries first announced plans to open talks on a comprehensive bilateral FTA to remove tariff and nontariff barriers and expand trade between their countries in February. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2006/Feb/03-116455.html>).)

Before coming to the United States, Roh will visit Greece, Romania and Finland, according to the official English-language Web site of the South Korean government.

While in Finland, which holds the rotational presidency of the European Union, he will attend the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) taking place in Helsinki, September 10-11.

For additional information, see The U.S. and the Korean Peninsula (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/north_korea.html).

See also "Bush, Roh Emphasize Unified Stance on North Korea (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=November&x=20051117122049ajesrom0.7810785&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>)."

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*WPD314 08/16/2006

Villages in Thailand Rebuilt Through Consensus After Tsunami
(Partnership for a Better Life) (290)

After the December 2004 tsunami hit Thailand, the central government took charge of relief efforts across the country. Although this was beneficial in many ways, one consequence was that local authorities lost their say in how reconstruction efforts would progress in their communities.

To villagers in the tsunami-affected subdistrict of Kampuan in southern Thailand's Ranong province, this system often was frustrating -- they did not know who to turn to or how to apply for assistance.

Tensions were growing, heightened by monsoon rains, limited resources and lost livelihoods. Villagers felt that if they could help coordinate relief efforts with affected parties, they could make the recovery process more fair and effective.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) heard about the villagers' situation and began to encourage input from all affected parties about reconstruction decisions. Thousands of villagers gathered at meetings with government officials to identify community needs and priorities.

With USAID assistance, communities learned how to map a course of action and ensure that decisions were made in a democratic manner. Villagers also developed the criteria for prioritizing aid and mechanisms to ensure that aid delivery was transparent.

Additionally, villagers elected two representatives -- a man and a woman -- who now communicate their concerns to government officials and relay reconstruction-related news to their community. USAID sponsored cash-for-work projects and contributed to a revolving loan fund that the villagers managed.

Meanwhile, USAID is working to build consensus with Thailand's appropriate government agencies on a regional development plan that promotes diversified livelihoods, benefit sharing and sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism.

Together, these measures are improving reconstruction efforts and mitigating conflict in affected communities.

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*WPD315 08/16/2006

United States Breaks Up "Drug Pipeline" from Mexico
(Group shipped potent "black tar" heroin into U.S. cities) (520)

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. law enforcement authorities have arrested 138 people in a case involving the shipment of a potent form of heroin from Mexico into the United States, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

In an August 15 statement, the DEA said an investigation called "Operation Black Gold Rush," involving a number of U.S. law enforcement agencies, exposed a network of illegal aliens that controlled a pipeline of "black tar" heroin operating from the Mexican state of Nayarit to Nashville, Tennessee, and at least 14 cities between those two points.

The DEA said black tar heroin gets its name from being dark and sticky in appearance, and is made from the opium poppy plant. The DEA said black tar heroin accounts for as much as 80 percent of the total heroin produced in Mexico. Black tar heroin can be smoked as well as injected, and is less expensive (at the street level) in the United States than other types of heroin, said the DEA.

To date, the United States has seized more than \$500,000 in cash representing illegal proceeds from the DEA-led Operation Black Gold Rush, as well as 17 kilograms of the black tar heroin.

Members of the trafficking organization that controlled the pipeline are alleged to have been responsible for importing and distributing about 10 kilograms to 15 kilograms of black tar heroin monthly from Mexico into the United States. That amount of the drug could be sold at an estimated street value of more than \$3 million. Some of the cities involved in the trafficking group's operations included Indianapolis; Denver; Los Angeles and Riverside, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbia, Greenville, Charleston and Florence in South Carolina; and Phoenix.

The DEA alleged that the organization used illegal aliens as couriers, who were part of a "call and deliver" system of drug distribution whereby customers could have their heroin literally delivered to the front door. The organization's financial managers allegedly laundered the illicit proceeds using a combination of wire remitters and bulk currency transport, said the DEA.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said that the United States and Mexico are both "absolutely committed" to combating the illicit narcotics trade.

During her trip to Mexico in March 2005, Rice said that within the "context of Mexico's own laws," that country has been a "very good partner" on counternarcotics issues. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=March&x=20050311124529AeneerG0.7562372&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html>).)

The U.S. State Department said in its 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, released March 1, that Mexico is one of the largest producers of heroin consumed in the United States.

The report, covering the year 2005, said Mexican opium poppy growers used small, widely dispersed plots in remote, inaccessible regions of Mexico, including the Sierra Madre mountains, to avoid having their crops detected and eradicated. The section of the report pertaining to Mexico (<http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2005/vol1/html/42364.htm>) is available on the State Department Web

site, along with more information on U.S. policy toward Mexico (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/mexico.html>).

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*WPD316 08/16/2006

U.S.-Backed Haiti Stabilization Mission Extended to February 2007
(U.N. Security Council votes unanimously for six-month extension) (640)

By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A U.S.-backed international stabilization mission in Haiti has been extended for another six months, until February 15, 2007, and most likely will be renewed past that date for further periods.

The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously August 15 to extend the mission, which had been set to expire that day. The mission, known by the acronym MINUSTAH, was created by a Security Council resolution on April 30, 2004.

Some 37 countries, including the United States, are providing personnel to MINUSTAH. The United States also made a new pledge July 25 of almost \$210 million over the next year to help in Haiti's economic recovery. The pledge was made at an international donors' conference for Haiti, held in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince. It follows previous U.S. funding assistance for Haiti. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060727140036AEneerG0.2416345>).)

The new Security Council resolution says MINUSTAH should consist of a military component of up to 7,200 troops and a police component of up to 1,951 officers. As of mid-July, there were some 6,200 troops and 1,687 police. The resolution further urged the U.N. member states to provide MINUSTAH with well-qualified French-speaking police candidates with specific expertise in, among other things, anti-gang operations.

The resolution also called on MINUSTAH to "reorient its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts" in Haiti toward a community violence-reduction program. The United Nations said those efforts would help Haiti's government and the international donor community on initiatives to provide employment opportunities to former gang members and at-risk youth.

In addition, the resolution urged Haitian authorities to complete run-off elections as soon as possible in those areas where the "electoral process was disrupted or appeals were upheld." MINUSTAH was asked to provide "all appropriate assistance" for staging those elections.

The United Nations quoted from the organization's secretary-general, Kofi Annan, who said that with the successful completion of national elections in Haiti earlier in 2006 "a new page" in the country's history had been turned.

René Préal was elected democratically as Haiti's new president February 7 and sworn into office May 14 in Port-au-Prince at a ceremony attended by a U.S. delegation headed by Florida Governor Jeb Bush. According to a U.S. State Department fact sheet released May 25, the United States spent more than \$340 million in fiscal years 2004 and 2005 to improve governance, security, the rule of law and economic recovery, as well as to meet critical humanitarian needs in Haiti. (See fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2006/66935.htm>).)

Annan said in a report on the U.N. mission in Haiti that the citizens of that nation "have a unique opportunity to break the cycle of violence and poverty and move towards a future of stable and peaceful development. In this, they will be guided by a new leadership which emerged from a free, fair and inclusive electoral process, conducted in safety and dignity."

Préval has shown a "commendable determination to reach out to all political and social forces in Haiti in a spirit of reconciliation and dialogue, leaving behind decades of tension and exclusion," said Annan.

The United Nations says violent crime remains a problem of enormous magnitude in Haiti, especially in Port-au-Prince, where the number of kidnappings by armed groups has started to surge again after declining at the beginning of 2006.

Annan said illicit trafficking in weapons and drugs remains an "obstacle to successfully fighting crime, impunity and corruption" in Haiti. Annan's report (<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/441/61/IMG/N0644161.pdf?OpenElement>) (PDF, 23 pages) and the text of the Security Council resolution (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/sc8811.doc.htm>) are available on the U.N. Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy toward Haiti, see Haiti (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/caribbean/haiti.html>).

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*WPD317 08/16/2006

Pop Icon Elvis Presley Remembered on Anniversary of Death
(Singer who sold 1 billion records and defined an era died August 16, 1977) (1000)

By Michael Jay Friedman and Carolee Walker
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- Before "Elvis," Beatles vocalist and rhythm guitarist John Lennon once said, "there was nothing." Lennon exaggerated -- but not by much. By the late 1950s, Elvis Aaron Presley (1935–1977), a dirt-poor country boy had emerged as "The King" -- Hollywood star, top-selling recording artist (of all time, by some measures) and cultural icon. His first and perhaps most lasting achievement, though, was introducing the rhythm-and-blues music pioneered by African Americans to a white audience. Elvis fused what then often was known as "black music" with the "country" sound prevalent in the South. The result was called "rockabilly," but subsequent generations -- John Lennon included -- heard the beginning of rock 'n' roll.

Elvis was born on January 8, 1935, in what has been described as a "two-room shotgun house" in East Tupelo, Mississippi. (A "shotgun house" typically refers to a narrow one-story dwelling without halls, each room placed single file behind the other; so named because in theory a shotgun fired through the front door would pass through each room and out the back door.)

In 1948, the Presley family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, a city associated with the blues since at least 1912, when W.C. Handy published the hit song "Memphis Blues." After World War II, the Memphis blues scene had turned electric, pioneering separate roles for lead and rhythm guitar. Artists congregated on Beale Street, a major nexus of African American-owned clubs, restaurants and shops (it also was emblematic of the rougher side of town; one music producer called Beale Street "the center of all evil in the known universe." Today, much rehabilitated, it is a national landmark.) Among the blues masters plying their trade there were Howlin' Wolf, Ike Turner and B.B. King. King later would recall how the teenage Presley "used to come around and be around us a lot."

Young Presley's other great musical influence came from the local Pentecostal churches he attended. The gospel music he heard there would shape his future sound, as would the country-and-western music popular among southern whites.

In 1953, Presley made his first demo recording for producer Sam Phillips' Memphis-based Sun Records. Phillips believed that a white artist capable of making that music accessible to a white audience—"a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel" -- would enjoy great commercial success. Elvis frankly acknowledged his debt to his African-American predecessors: "The colored folks been singing it and playing it just like I'm doin' now, man, for more years than I know," he said on one occasion. "They played it like that in the shanties and in their juke joints, and nobody paid it no mind 'til I goosed it up. I got it from them." Presley's success in turn helped early black rockers like Chuck Berry and Little Richard sell records to white teenagers.

Between 1953 and 1955, Presley recorded a number of regional hits for Sun. Some were country-flavored, while others were remakes, or "covers," of African-American blues. In November 1955, his manager, "Colonel" Tom Parker (actually born in the Netherlands as Andreas Cornelius van Kuijk) arranged the purchase of Presley's contract by the much larger RCA Records.

Major hit records followed: classics like "Heartbreak Hotel," "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You," "Don't Be Cruel" "Hound Dog," and "Love Me Tender" in 1956 alone. These hits fused a number of American musical traditions: blues, bluegrass, R&B, hillbilly boogie and more.

Elvis swiftly emerged as "The King." Tall and slim, with long sideburns and a pompadour, he had unlimited star potential. RCA arranged a number of national television appearances. Criticism of Presley's allegedly suggestive hip "gyrations" and swivels during an April 1956 performance of "Hound Dog" only increased his popularity—and earned him the sobriquet "Elvis the Pelvis." By fall, The Ed Sullivan Show paid Elvis an unprecedented \$50,000 for three appearances. The first, in September 1956, drew an estimated 82.5 percent of the television audience.

Presley's fame grew. He began to star in motion pictures like Love Me Tender (1956) and Jailhouse Rock (1957). While Elvis was not a trained actor, his charisma filled the big screen. He continued to star in films like Blue Hawaii and Viva Las Vegas throughout the 1960s.

In March 1958, Presley was inducted into the United States Army for a two-year stint. Thousands of fans wrote pleading letters, begging that their hero not be drafted. Thousands more (female) fans reportedly wept when their hero's locks were sheared in a regulation military crew cut. But Elvis returned to civilian life two years later, and more hit records and movies followed. It has been estimated that The King has sold more than 1 billion recordings.

Presley continued to enjoy commercial success during the 1960s, although changing tastes brought artists associated with Motown and the "British Invasion" more to the fore with younger listeners. Elvis' audience aged with him, and for many, Presley symbolized the America of their youth. In his 1986 song Graceland, named for Elvis' Memphis estate, now a pilgrimage site for Presley's fans, Paul Simon memorably declared: "For reasons I cannot explain | There's some part of me wants to see Graceland."

Elvis Presley died at Graceland on August 16, 1977. His music, personality and verve touched millions, from American teens of the 1950s to Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who paid his respects in June as one of the 750,000 annual visitors to Graceland. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=20060627090034esnamfuak0.8257563>).)

Elvis' greatest legacy, though, is the music, and the rockers and other musicians who built on it. When Presley died, superstar Bruce Springsteen said: "It was like he whispered his dream in all our ears and then we dreamed it."

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Transcript: Press Briefing by Tony Snow

(President's schedule, war on terror, Israel/Lebanon, Lebanon/humanitarian aid, homeland security/airlines, Iraq, Lebanon/Hezbollah, South Korea/presidential visit) (6960)

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

August 16, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY TONY SNOW

White House Conference Center Briefing Room

11:11 A.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: A number of things to do here at the top. First, the President's day. Let's see, he's just concluded a policy time. He is going to be going to York, Pennsylvania, for a tour of a Harley-Davidson Vehicle Operations facility. There will be a roundtable with employees on the economy, an interview with USA Today, a statement to the press pool. He will attend a Lynn Swann for Governor reception -- that will be expanded pool -- and arrive back at the White House at about 7:20 p.m. this evening.

In addition, you probably know that United Airlines Flight 923 was diverted on its way back to Washington-Dulles from London's Heathrow. It landed in Boston. Apparently, there was a determination made by senior cabin crew and pilots about an unruly passenger, but the flight landed without incident. The Department of Homeland Security will have further developments as people continue to assess the situation.

The President today granted pardons to 17 individuals, none of whom are still serving time, but these are largely for people who have served their time and this helps expunge their records.

Also, the President is going to welcome Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea to the White House on September 14th. The alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea is deeply rooted in common values and common interests. Together the two countries have stood against common threats and worked for the promotion of democracy, free markets, and universal human rights. President Bush looks forward to reviewing with President Roh progress and relations since their last bilateral meeting, on issues including our free trade agreement, negotiations in the six-party talks. The two leaders also will discuss critical regional and global issues, including winning the war on terror, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting an open international economic order.

There have been a number of allegations in the last few days by Democrats -- and I'll just read you one from Senator Harry Reid yesterday. "Five years after 9/11, al Qaeda has morphed into a global franchise operation. Terror attacks have increased sharply across the world, and the President has shut down the program designed to catch Osama bin Laden." This has become a fairly common refrain, so I thought I would take a couple of minutes to knock it down.

It's flatly untrue. Now, what has happened is that the CIA, in response to exactly what Senator Reid was talking about, a more diffuse al Qaeda, has, in fact, reshaped its unit dealing with al Qaeda to reflect that diffuse threat. But the notion that the President has shut down a program designed to catch Osama bin Laden is utterly without foundation. It was a reorganization, not a reduction, in effort and commitment.

The CIA's efforts to locate bin Laden and other senior al Qaeda figures has not been downgraded. To the contrary, it remains fully committed to locating bin Laden and his collaborators, and is devoting more resources, not less, toward the effort. The decision to reorganize, as I said, reflected changes in al Qaeda. And it's important to note that the effort to capture bin Laden is continuing unabated, and that the CIA's most experienced personnel working this issue remain fully engaged in the fight.

Some of the people making the allegations about the bin Laden unit know perfectly well what the facts are, and you do, too.

One other note: A number of newspapers today had -- or a couple, The New York Times and L.A. Times -- had pieces about the President's meeting the other day with Iraq scholars. Just a couple of nits to pick with the Times piece -- and I have spoken with the notetaker in the meeting, I was in the meeting, I've talked to others in the meeting and I've talked to all four scholars today, and all, to a person, take exception to a verb or variations of that verb that appear a number of times at the top of the piece, which is that the President is "frustrated." He's "frustrated" that the new Iraqi government and the Iraqi people have not shown greater support for the American mission. All the participants said that that did not reflect the meeting they attended.

"A sense of frustration on the lack of progress on the bigger picture of Iraq, generally" -- again, all of those in attendance said that that did not reflect their characterization. And a paragraph that said, "The President expressed frustration that Iraqis have not come to appreciate the sacrifices the United States has made in Iraq and was puzzled as to how a recent anti-American rally in support of Hezbollah in Baghdad could draw such a large crowd." That was unanimously rejected, as well.

Now, as I've said in the past, we tend not to go into detail about what these conversations -- what the people discuss, and I will continue to do that. Obviously, they're free to discuss what they had. But there were two pieces, and one I think did more -- at least reflect in accordance with my notes -- and I tried to be careful about this and tried not to ask leading questions, but I did talk to the four scholars and four others who were involved in the meeting, and all shared the same reflections, and their notes reflected these same points of view.

And with that, let's go. Jennifer.

QUESTION: Thanks, Tony. Is the White House or the President frustrated that the Lebanese government is not requiring Hezbollah to move their arms out of the south?

MR. SNOW: Well, no. I would hesitate to leap to conclusions about what the Lebanese government is and isn't doing. Prime Minister Siniora will be, in fact, delivering a speech I think tonight on the topic. And you've got to understand that right now you've got a new situation; the Lebanese armed forces are still preparing to begin to move south and it is going to be their job eventually to make sure that Hezbollah is disarmed and is no longer functioning as an independent militia. And we expect that to happen, but it's going to take some time.

You've seen all the stories about people simply -- right now trying to assemble the UNIFIL force. And that will take time, not merely because nations have to make contributions, but specific kinds -- task-specific delegations of troops. For instance, some are going to be doing customs, some are going to be doing mine removal, some are going to be doing operations in support of the armed forces and so on.

It requires a bit of time to get all those pieces put together. But it's important to realize that the Lebanese government will be in charge if disarming Hezbollah, and we expect that to happen. The Lebanese, with U.N. help, will be working on the border. As I said, that's a customs function. And the business of reconstruction also has to take place. And that is going to be the primary focus of what the Prime Minister has to say to the country -- at least according to our understanding.

Q: You said you expect that to happen, you expect the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah. But do you feel confident, does the White House feel confident that there's the will within the government to do that?

MR. SNOW: I don't want to get too much into conversations we've had, but the general answer is, yes, that the Lebanese government understands the importance of making sure that you don't have what amounts to a de facto competitor in the form of Hezbollah operating independently.

I think one of the things to note is that for the last 30 years, there has been little or no Lebanese armed forces presence in southern Lebanon. It's been either Israelis or Hezbollah. And it's going to take time for the forces, once again, to be able to move there and to get the lay of the land and be able to operate effectively. And that's one of the reasons why also we deem it necessary and appropriate to have UNIFIL forces assisting.

Bill.

Q: Judging by reports today and yesterday, Hezbollah has already moved in on the reconstruction front, and moved in, apparently, with the backing of a great deal of Iranian money. And what their intention is, according to one story -- and this is a quote from one of their leaders -- "to complete the victory." Now, they were very good at delivering social services before the fighting began. Presumably they intend to do it since. How do you manifest the presence of the Lebanese government under those circumstances?

MR. SNOW: Well, it's pretty easy, actually. In terms of completing the victory, again, if you take a look at things that have come out in terms of the public reaction to Hezbollah, it has -- I think victory is going to be, at the very best, a highly contentious term. You've got Hezbollah that willingly placed at risk civilians, their homes and other things. And so they come in, they invite billions of dollars of destruction into Lebanon knowingly, and now they're saying, oh, we'll give you a little tiny, itty-bitty, fractional, tiny sliver of that money back in terms of cash payments. I'm sure the people will accept the cash, but they're probably not all going to be all that deluded about the nature of the people who are delivering it.

Meanwhile, it's also worth noting Hezbollah is apparently getting \$150 million, \$200 million from Iraq. Right now, the U.S. and the international community --

Q: Iran.

MR. SNOW: I'm sorry, Iran, thank you. The U.S. and the international community already have pledges of \$425 million and more to come. The United States is going to have -- is going to participate in a humanitarian donors conference on August 31st. There's also considerable talk about reconstruction. The fact is, it's important to get Lebanon reconstructed. And if I were Hezbollah, I'd do the same thing. If I had just caused the wholesale destruction of portions of a country, I think I'd try to improve my public standing, too, and spread around a little money, and that's exactly what they're doing.

Q: But you're talking about timing here. This is like getting the streets plowed in Chicago after the snow falls. This is delivery of services. And they're going to be in there -- apparently, they are already -- while we're talking about donor conferences.

MR. SNOW: Well, actually, no, the United States has contributed \$30 million so far, and \$24 million of it is already in place. It's there. We got 24 million bucks that are on the ground immediately. And I think what you're -- the donor conferences are in addition to the \$425 million that's already being pledged and distributed. Again --

Q: Can you get the stuff on the ground?

MR. SNOW: Yes. I mean I've just told you, the United States out of its opening contribution -- by the way, Secretary Rice, I think it was in -- well, it was in an op-ed piece today, announced that there are going to be an additional \$20 million, and that's just the beginning of humanitarian assistance. But, yes.

But again, the longer-term question, Bill, is not the race to -- Hezbollah can spread around money, but it is not going to be able to delude people into the fact that they were firing rockets out of homes and they were placing people at risk. This is one of these questions that you sit back and see how things shake out, and see whether Hezbollah is embraced as an organization that reflected Lebanese needs, or Iranian orders.

Q: Can you tell us how the President was notified about the airline incident? And was there an air marshal on board? And when he talks about vigilance, apparently some of the other passengers tried to get involved to try to quiet the situation -- is that the sort of thing the President would want people to do?

MR. SNOW: Well, I honestly don't know when the President was notified because I was getting ready for this briefing, and this news has just gone down in the last hour. The best thing to do is what I did before - - Homeland Security is going to have details on this, and I'd refer to them.

The important thing -- we've always talked about the importance of vigilance. When you had the shoe bomber incident, as a matter of fact, it was passengers who played an important role. Apparently, you had an agitated passenger. We'll find out who this person was, what he or she may have been trying to do. But I don't want to get too far ahead of the facts. The facts, at least as I have them, are still pretty sketchy. There have been reports, but I think our people are really trying to confirm everything. Later in the day, they'll probably have a lot more detail available for you.

Brett.

Q: On homeland security, after the thwarted terror plot last week, there's a growing chorus of top Democrats specifically criticizing the administration for skimping on technology designed to detect explosives at airports five years after 9/11. What's the administration's response?

MR. SNOW: It's simply not true. The administration has devoted considerable resources. It's interesting that every time we have a success, Democrats come out and complain. Now, I don't quite understand that, unless they're seeking desperately some political advantage out of a success story. What they ought to be doing is saying, good, let's continue to work together to make it better. And I think that's an important tone to strike. But I'm kind of at odds and ends to try to figure out why we have a lot of second-guessing going on. It seems to me -- just as I was pointing out earlier, with these allegations about the bin Laden unit, a lot of people who are making these comments know exactly what the facts are. And I understand that it's a political year, and we get accused of politicizing when stuff like this is thrown our way. What I would suggest is that those who are interested, please come up with a credible, specific proposal upon which people can act. We are all for doing everything we can to make the homeland more secure. And I think all Americans would appreciate that.

Helen.

Q: Is there a civil war going on in Iraq? And is the President frustrated with the lack of American public support for Iraq?

MR. SNOW: No, number one, there is not a civil war going on. I was on the phone earlier today with Major General Caldwell in Baghdad --

Q: One hundred people a day?

MR. SNOW: He understands. And the other thing that's happening is that there has been -- there has been some improvement at least in the situation on the ground, slightly. Yes, you have a number of sectarian violence operations going on, but you've also seen now in targeted neighborhoods in Baghdad, there has been a notable decrease in violence in three of the neighborhoods that have been targeted in the last week, and that's obviously a promising sign; that's not a victory lap.

Prime Minister Maliki today went outside the Green Zone to talk about Iraqi forces -- to talk to Iraqi forces, not only to thank them for their efforts, but to encourage them. And it's significant to note that the one thing he said was that Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Sunni, Shia and Turkmen should be united with each other to form a country united to defeat terrorism. And I think what you saw there, at least according to General Caldwell, was a very passionate speech delivered by the elected head of Iraq.

Everybody knows that sectarian violence is a problem, and that extremists, especially in the Sunni and Shia camps, are doing everything they can to disrupt it. And we're keenly aware of that. For those who argue that the administration does not react, as a matter of fact, there is constant adjustment in terms of strategy and tactics to meet that challenge, because it's a very real challenge. And it's one that Prime Minister Maliki is working with our forces in the field to try to deal with, because he has to. And we know that, we understand it. We also understand that those who want Iraq to fail as a democracy will do everything they can, they're going to do everything in their power. And what we have to do is to demonstrate the determination and commitment to see it through.

As the President has said -- the President knows the capability of our forces, and he knows the decency of the American people, and he knows that people do not want us to walk away from something this important. As far as public opinion polls, I've addressed it many times. He's aware of polls, but he's also more keenly aware of his constitutional obligations, and he takes that first, and if it means taking a PR hit --

Q: He doesn't think he needs the support of the American people on the Iraqi endeavor?

MR. SNOW: I think what's going to happen, as people learn more and more -- as you saw just last week, there was an 11-point pivot just on the basis of the fact that things that people had not seen in terms of behind-the-scenes operations to thwart terror, suddenly said, oh, boy, we do have something -- boom, 11-point jump. I think as people begin to see more --

Q: I'm talking about Iraq.

MR. SNOW: Well, as people begin to see more of what's going on -- and Major General Caldwell is doing detailed briefings -- and one of these days maybe will bring some of the slides and things that he has -- giving you a better sense from ground level what's going on. I don't think -- I think the American people see headlines, they hear about these appalling acts of violence, and they are rightly concerned. What they don't see are the operations ongoing, the apprehensions of terrorists, the seizure of weapons caches, all of which are going on on a daily basis.

Q: Is everybody a terrorist who opposes our presence in Iraq?

MR. SNOW: No, but somebody is a terrorist who kills innocent civilians to try to make a political point.

Jennifer.

Q: The First Lady is making three campaign stops today. Why is the --

MR. SNOW: Is Holland interrupting you?

Q: It's okay when he interrupts. He's allowed.

MR. SNOW: Okay, go ahead.

Q: Why is Mrs. Bush campaigning more this year than ever before?

MR. SNOW: I think, number one, she understands how important these midterms are. And she likes doing it. I think she's become very comfortable going out, delivering speeches. And she believes firmly in what her husband is trying to do as President, and she's offering whatever support she can.

Q: Is she more effective at delivering certain messages than the President, in his view?

MR. SNOW: I don't know. I don't think I'm the one to say, sir, is your wife better at delivering a message than you? Maybe you could do that, but I'm not going to do it. (Laughter.)

Q: But certainly the President's advisors have a view on where she's effective -- she's going to different states than the President goes to. What's the strategy behind her --

MR. SNOW: It's interesting, because when we do scheduling meetings, we just do presidential scheduling meetings. And so there may be, at some level, people talking about parsing these. I honestly don't know and I'll try to find out. But I am not aware that it really is that kind of mission-specific. And a lot of times you've got differing requests. As you know, the Vice President is also giving more speeches than he tends to give. I'm not getting a lot of Vice President questions. But the fact is, this is a very important midterm and you're going to have key members of this administration out, speaking, trying to talk about the President's message and his record, and trying also to support Republican candidates in the House and Senate.

Q: Do you think the First Lady is essential to a Republican victory?

MR. SNOW: I don't know, but I think she's certainly helpful.

Steve.

Q: If the President is not frustrated by the situation in Iraq, what is he?

MR. SNOW: Determined.

Q: Is he -- does he feel like the Maliki government is doing an effective job?

MR. SNOW: He feels like the Maliki government -- look, you've got a government that is brand new. As I told you, today you had the Prime Minister going outside the Green Zone, addressing forces, Iraqi forces in Baghdad neighborhoods. This is a guy who has a series of challenges before him with his government, and the President is impressed not only by his determination to get the job done, but the fact is that he is working aggressively to do these things. We don't expect him to be an overnight success in dealing with all these problems; nobody can be. But the President certainly supports Prime Minister Maliki.

And the frustration angle is just one that just doesn't -- when you're facing a situation, you don't sit around and get frustrated. You figure out how to get the job done. And I've said it many times, and I'll say it because it's true: The President is somebody who's intensely practical about these things, and not somebody who sits around and goes, "Nnnnyoo!" -- I can't wait to see you how you transcribe that. (Laughter.)

Q: Do that again.

Q: Who is one of those people?

Q: Rove. Rove does that.

Q: Yes, he does do that. (Laughter.)

Q: Are there such people? (Laughter.)

Q: Tony, on the United Airlines flight, you said it's an unruly passenger. Anything at all to suggest terrorism?

MR. SNOW: I don't want to -- like I said, I don't want to run ahead of facts. DHS I know is accumulating that stuff. I'd much rather hand it off to them because, obviously, as we were all heading over here, they were still off-loading passengers from the plane, so I have a feeling they're going to do some interviews and take a look at stuff. A couple, three hours we ought to have just a much better picture.

Q: Was he an unruly, posed a threat -- I mean, was he a threat, or just unruly?

MR. SNOW: I think it was a she.

Q: And can I ask another one, about what Bill was asking about earlier, with Hezbollah? You said we have to kind of see where things shake out, but wouldn't you concede that time is really of the essence, that as people are going back and looking for help, that's an opportunity for Hezbollah to reassert itself?

MR. SNOW: I think Hezbollah is going to do everything it can to try to mount a PR offensive, because people in Lebanon know what the deal is and what Hezbollah is going to try to say is, okay, well, we've stopped being terrorists now, we're going to be humanitarians. It's important for everybody to be humanitarians; it's also important for Hezbollah to stop acting as a terrorist organization, taking orders not from the Lebanese people, but from people in Tehran, and to step up and take a political path.

Look, if Hezbollah decides to be peaceful, political, tries -- disarms, goes in and abides by U.N. Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701, that's great. That's good news, that's not bad news. That is something devoutly to be wished. But it is going to be up to Hezbollah to take those steps. And if it doesn't, then the business of disarming is going to have to proceed.

Jim.

Q: On the same question, what we've been hearing from the administration from the start was that whatever solution came to pass had to address the root cause of the problem. Pushing Hezbollah back -- a lot of us took it to mean disarming. I'd have to parse the language, but --

MR. SNOW: No, disarming is part of the deal.

Q: So in terms of that, is it possible that the solution that we now have will not bring that to pass? And then, the second part of that question is that the logic of what you're saying is one thing, but is the U.S. doing much to tell the Lebanese people its view of the conflict and Hezbollah's role in the conflict?

MR. SNOW: I think we've been awfully clear about it, and I dare say a lot of people in Lebanon share that point of view. In terms of is this particular formulation or group of forces going to be successful in disarming, we hope so. I don't have the crystal ball, but that is what this is designed to do, is to place on the ground forces that will be credible.

Again, there are also going to be pressures on Hezbollah. There are pressures being brought to bear on Syria and Iran, and I think it's safe to say that Hezbollah also is being offered a choice here, which is to take a peaceful path, or to try to rearm. One of the other challenges, as you know, is trying to secure the border with Syria to make sure that armed shipments can't get through, and also to take a look at the ports. So all these are pieces of the equation. One of the big wild cards here is how Hezbollah and how its present and I hope soon to be previous masters respond to this. And as the situation changes, you may have to adjust.

Q: But the picture out of Lebanon right now, and it's a picture that's three days out, okay, but it's certainly, Hezbollah declared victory, they're rebuilding, they seem to have popular support. It's not a picture that one may have expected to see at the start of the conflict. Is the administration confident that it will still get the end result it wanted?

MR. SNOW: The end result we want is a peaceful, democratic Lebanon. I mean, again, if you have Hezbollah turning peaceful and everybody loves it, that's fine. As long as Hezbollah decides to be democratic. But the point is it's been a terror organization. Hezbollah suckered a lot of people, including journalistic organizations in this room, because it ended up being able to stage photographs. Remember Anderson Cooper getting up there saying, every single thing we go to is getting staged here. You've had news organizations having to pull photographs because they were bogus. They have done a masterful PR campaign, no doubt about it. The question is --

Q: Will the U.S. do a masterful --

MR. SNOW: What we're going to try to do is simply demonstrate our goodwill by pushing for humanitarian and reconstruction aid, and also continuing the diplomatic work of making sure that there is a prospect -- every possible prospect, and one that we are determined to see succeed, of the democracy in Lebanon standing up and being able to assert a full sovereignty throughout the Lebanese countryside.

And again, the Lebanese armed forces have not been a presence in that part of Lebanon for a long time. It's going to take some time to make that transition. Hezbollah, good, bad, or indifferent, is a much more familiar presence in that area right now. But the familiarity, in some cases, I think, I dare say, will also bring contempt, and has.

Q: Tony, Secretary Rice gave an interview this morning where she said that the U.N. troops going in would not have the job of disarming Hezbollah, that would be left to largely a political process with the Lebanese government. I want to be clear: Do you folks envision that anyone has the job of physically taking arms away from Hezbollah fighters, whether that's the Lebanese army --

MR. SNOW: We're going to have to see if it comes to that. I mean, again, we're hoping that the political process works. If it has to come to that, one presumes it will. But I don't want to prejudge.

Q: What is the political process. The Lebanese government sitting down with Hezbollah and saying --

MR. SNOW: No, part of it is the Lebanese government -- again, you're going to have 15,000 UNIFIL troops, as well -- going to be moving 30,000 or so troops into that part of the country. That's a pretty significant presence. And it is going to be the job of those forces to either reason with, or deal with Hezbollah on the arms front.

The other thing is, at this point, even though Hezbollah is running around saying, we won, we won, you and I don't know what those bunkers look like; you and I don't know what the arms caches look like; you and I don't know what the Katyusha rocket sites look like; you and I don't know how many Zelzals are still there. We simply don't know. So Hezbollah dealing with a total vacuum of information is doing what it has done before, which is playing a good PR game. The important thing is to have effective forces on the ground to persuade it to play not a game of peace, but actually pursue peace.

Q: You actually raise a good point: Does the United States have an assessment of how well-armed Hezbollah remains? I don't think they've fired --

MR. SNOW: I think we are -- well, they fired at least one. You know what, that's an intelligence question I don't feel comfortable trying to address from here.

Q: Is there much discussion of trying to strengthen the Lebanese government in various ways, militarily or --

MR. SNOW: There is already -- we're already supplementing the Lebanese armed forces, and we'll continue to do so. And, yes, absolutely. I talked to Secretary Rice earlier today, and she stressed that the \$50 million is the beginning of a long-term and serious commitment to the government of Lebanon. I don't know what will be announced when, but the fact is, absolutely, we're committed to the success of the government.

Q: How much --

MR. SNOW: I don't know. I honestly don't know.

Q: Can I follow up on that?

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: There seems to be a Catch-22, though, that while the Lebanese government we're trying to elevate is busy fixing roads and bridges in the country, they don't have the kind of walk-around money for social services that Hezbollah has down in the south.

MR. SNOW: Well, I just told you, we're talking already of commitments that are double what Hezbollah has. And one --

Q: I'm talking about services --

MR. SNOW: No, no, no, I'm talking about international commitments. The Saudis have made commitments, the Iraqis have made commitments, we've made commitments, strictly on the humanitarian side. There is a separate pot of money that is also being discussed for reconstruction. That is going to be the topic of the August 31st meeting. So, yes, there are humanitarian commitments. But, again, Hezbollah can spread out all the walking-around money it wants, but people also remember who is putting rockets in their living rooms.

Richard.

Q: What's the White House's reaction to the offer by Jesse Jackson to go over there and try to get involved and negotiate a prisoner exchange?

MR. SNOW: Sometimes a picture says a thousands words.

Q: Tony, talking on terrorism, celebrating India's 60th independence anniversary, the President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam, he said that as far as terrorism is concerned, to eradicate it from society, a global unity needed, and terrorists don't go without any planning and --

MR. SNOW: Okay, but what's the question?

Q: My question, also in London, Muslim experts are saying that the reason for all these terrorists are they are being misled by the older mullahs in the mosques, and educated -- same thing goes here in the U.S. as far as those mosques are concerned.

MR. SNOW: Okay, just -- Goyal, thank you. Look, the war on terror takes many forms. There is propaganda, there is education, or the attempt to steer people. And you're right, a number of mosques around the world have served as places of incitement. But in the end, it is our confidence that not only the battle of ideas -- and it's very important to wage that battle of ideas, and we will do it, and we intend to do it -- but also the battle of results. To have a democracy that allows people to have sovereignty over their lives is something that we think is so powerful, and that the yearning for freedom is so natural, that that is going to send a powerful signal throughout the region. People are going to want more of it. And that's why the President is determined to stay the course.

April.

Q: Back on Hezbollah and Lebanon and Israel. Is there concern by this administration that France and some other international countries are slow in responding to putting an international force together for the U.N.?

MR. SNOW: No, as a matter of fact, the French, Italian, and Turkish governments are meeting today in Lebanon -- the foreign ministers -- talking about these issues with the government of Lebanon today.

Q: But France is supposed to lead and they're not really happy about it, and they've got to go -- they're supposed to announce it tomorrow, but still they're not coming out and saying, we're going to do this --

MR. SNOW: No, friendship -- you're probably less high on your call list than the Prime Minister of Lebanon. And so what's -- (laughter.) So what's going on here is that, again, there are active and ongoing discussions, but as I've mentioned at the outset, this is not simply, give me 5,000 guys with boots on. I mean, you got to have people who have distinct chores and distinct tasks. And that does take a little time to sort out. It's going to take time to get the force fully deployed. But the French have --

Q: The French are out, but they're dragging their feet --

MR. SNOW: I'm not sure that's the case. I wouldn't share your characterization. You've got me up here defending the French. It's global news. (Laughter.)

Q: Back on Richard's issue with Jesse Jackson, does the administration not want Jackson to get involved because it could cause problems?

MR. SNOW: No, the United States has duly appointed and delegated and congressionally confirmed diplomats. They're the proper people to handle this work.

Q: Tony, there's a reassessment now by the Olmert government in regard to their situation in the region after the cease-fire. The Defense Minister yesterday said that there would be a rethinking in trying to create a Syrian track to try and resolve some of the problems with Syria. Some people are talking about the possibility of a regional solution -- and things like that, in which all the relations of Israel, with their Arab neighbors, can be at least put on the track to a resolution. Would the U.S. also be in favor of this kind of solution? Would that affect the U.S. relationship with Syria? Are we prepared to try and bring them into the planning --

MR. SNOW: It's up to Syria to demonstrate goodwill. We've got a chargé there, for the bazillionth time. They've got an ambassador here. And we have always talked -- I've tried to frame this over and over as something that requires a comprehensive look, because to look at Lebanon in isolation is to fail to see what happened with Hamas and the Palestinian areas, where it appeared that Prime Minister Olmert, working with President Abbas, was getting close to trying to work out a deal not only on a prisoner release, but moving toward having a two-state solution in the area. All of that important for -- if you have stable democracies in Lebanon and in the Palestinian areas, it simply is going to make it a lot easier for Israel to build closer ties throughout the region.

So I think it's perfectly natural to support a regional solution, but you have to address, again, root causes. And Syria right now is a big part of that problem, and Syria does have to go ahead -- if it wants to be part of the discussions, it has to demonstrate that it's willing to be part of the solution.

Q: Tony, I wonder if you found any examples of other Republican Presidents not endorsing Republican candidates?

MR. SNOW: We've got to pull that out. We pulled it yesterday. I'll get it for you./1

Q: Thank you.

Q: Beginning in April, Tony, there was talk that the President would meet with the Big Three automakers about some of their concerns -- legacy costs, health care costs, currency manipulation. I'm wondering, with the President's emphasis on the economy and what's ahead in the next year, is that meeting back on the schedule?

MR. SNOW: It's not yet back on the schedule. This has been the event that -- this has been the most benighted event I've ever seen in my life, because it's ended up getting swamped by events on a number of occasions. In one case, one of the participants prematurely announced something that hadn't fully been put in place. But, yes, it's not on the schedule, but it's something we intend to go forward with.

Q: So we should expect it in the next couple of months?

MR. SNOW: I have no earthly idea. I really don't.

Q: So it's a scheduling conflict issue, it's not that the President --

MR. SNOW: The President is not snubbing the Big Three, they're an important part of the American economy.

Q: Next month the South Korean President is here. Do you know what the status of his visit? Is it a state visit or a business visit?

MR. SNOW: I don't know. I'll find out. I honestly don't know. All I did is I gave you the readout today. We've had our official announcement. Fred, do we know if it's a state visit, as opposed to an official visit?

MR. JONES: We'll have to find out.

MR. SNOW: We'll have to find out.

Q: So if Hezbollah disarms and turns peaceful, the United States will lift its designation of them as a terrorist organization and recognize it as a legitimate political entity?

MR. SNOW: Let's wait and see what happens. I mean, good consequences tend to flow from good actions. We've always said that. When we've talked about the Iranians and the nuclear issue, we've said, there's a way forward. In dealing with the North Koreans, we've said, you come to the table there are going to be good consequences. So good behavior also ought to be rewarded. But I'm not going to try to answer hypotheticals, beyond giving you a very hypothetical formulation.

John.

Q: Are you commenting on Iran's international holocaust cartoon contest?

MR. SNOW: No, and I -- no, I'm not.

Q: Thank you.

MR. SNOW: All right, thank you.

END 11:45 A.M. EDT

1/Some examples: In 1970, President Nixon took a neutral position in the US Senate race between Sen. Charles E. Goodell (R-NY) and challengers Rep. Richard Ottinger (D-NY) and James L. Buckley. In 1980, Republican officials refused support for Rep. William Ford's (D-MI) Republican opponent Gerald R. Carlson. In 1981, President Reagan promised not to campaign in the home districts of Democrats who voted for his tax cuts. One year later, the White House produced a list of 20 Democrats who the President and Vice President would not campaign against that cycle. In 1990, Democratic National Committee Chairman Ron Brown denounced Rep. Gus Savage (D-IL) and pledged to not fund his reelection campaign. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush refused to endorse Louisiana Gubernatorial candidate David Duke.

(end transcript)

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Transcript: Press Briefing by Tony Snow

(Syria/designated terrorist groups, homeland security/global war on terrorism, United Kingdom/airline plot, Iraq/Afghanistan, Israel/Lebanon, South Korea/China, immigration reform) (7450)

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
August 15, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY TONY SNOW

White House Conference Center Briefing Room

4:36 P.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: All right, thank you for accommodating me for my late schedule today. It's good to be here. Just a couple of things off the top and then we'll go to questions.

First, the Department of Treasury today has announced the designation of Syrian officials, General Hisham Ikhtiyar and General Jami Jami, under Executive Order 13338. It's aimed at financially isolating individuals and entities that are directly or significantly contributing to Syria's support for designated terrorist groups, its military or security presence in Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, interference with international efforts in Iraq, or that are acting for or on behalf of other specially designated nationals of Syria.

Also, there's considerable interest in the fact that the President today, in a series of long-scheduled briefings, spent some time today at the National Counterterrorism Center. Let me tell you a little bit about the briefings, put them in context for you. Again, these have long been on the schedule, but I think it's safe to say that the President understands that terror and the war on terror is one of the central concerns. As a matter of fact, every day begins with a national security briefing. He regularly receives updates on terror plots around the world.

Last week we were reminded that terrorists have -- there is no lull in terrorist plotting against the United States. And the President has spent a great deal of time encouraging members of his administration to be nimble, to be creative, and to be ever vigilant in fighting the war on terror. Today's briefings followed on that theme, and let me just give you a little sense of some of the things that were discussed.

There was a discussion of counterterrorism, where we are, what we've learned and what remains to be done. What the President got from a number of people -- and I'll give you a characterization in a moment -- was a sense of the kinds of improvements and the kinds of innovations we have been taking to try to make sure that we can stop terrorists before they hit us. After all, as the President has pointed out many times, the terrorist only has to succeed one time -- one time in the United States of America -- as they did on September 11, 2001, to create big news or to be able to declare victory. We can succeed thousands of times, but have one time when they get through and that will be deemed a defeat.

The President understands that and he feels very keenly that we ought, at all times, to do everything within our power and within our resources to look for innovative and effective ways to continue to fight the war on terror.

So we had briefings today from the -- among others, the Attorney General of the United States, talking about some of the ways of trying to transform the Department of Justice. One of those, incidentally, is to set up a new division that is supposed to fight terror -- that division right now being held up because the designee, at least at this point, is being held up for political reasons -- Senator Levin of Michigan -- even though it's U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C.

But also they were talking about ways of transforming and of making even more effective the efforts of the National -- well, going through all the things, let me just -- I'm bopping around here a little bit. He had component briefings of various portions in the National Counterterrorism Center, and also an extensive briefing about what's going on at the Department of Homeland Security, taking a look at ways in which the Department of Homeland Security is doing everything from trying to secure our borders, figure out who's crossing the borders, to trying to protect people from harmful things that may be coming into the United States, to trying in any way, shape or form possible to catch people who are trying to plot terror on our shores or commit terror coming in from abroad.

There is discussion of counter-terrorist techniques, counter-measures, and also response if, in fact, somebody should commit an act of terror on our soil. He received briefings from Secretary Chertoff. He also heard from, as I mentioned before, the Attorney General. He heard from Secretary Leavitt, and he also heard from Secretary Rumsfeld.

Final note here: One of the things that the 9/11 Commission and other commissions made clear is that the government no longer can operate as a series of isolated departments and agencies, but, especially when it comes to the war on terror, must act as one. You cannot have Department A and Department B doing exactly the same thing and duplicating efforts. They have to learn how to communicate.

So there was a lot of discussion, not only about how to get the most bang for the buck, but also to get people to work more effectively. The one thing that we do know is that in the war on terror we have increased assets, increased information -- but, most importantly, increased intel sharing -- and that there are extensive efforts to work with our allies to make sure that the war on terror truly is global. Because there is globalization of terrorists, there also ought to be globalization of counter-terror activities. And so that kind of gives you the flavor, at least, of what the President was hearing.

And I'm remiss -- Mark Knoller, welcome back. I know that you got out a shout out this morning from Dana, but we'll do it on camera, too. Yes, absolutely.

QUESTION: But what about this central Democratic argument that the money spent on the Iraq war has taken away from homeland security and the war on terrorism?

MR. SNOW: Well, it's an argument that seems to indicate the war on terror would not exist if we were not in Iraq. Let me remind everybody that the war -- that terrorists spent years plotting September 11th. Hezbollah has been active as a terrorist organization for decades. Hamas has been on the terror watch list for many years. Jimiya Islamia and other groups have also been on the terror watch list for years. So the fact is that the Iraq war has become a central point as Prime Minister Maliki has pointed out and the President said, as well, because terrorists are trying to figure out if Western governments have the will -- and also governments in the region have the will to stand up to isolated acts of terror that are designed to frighten and disrupt nations. The President said, no, it's not going to happen in the case of the United States of America.

But it's also pretty clear that in the war on terror we have, in fact, been doing a lot of things pretty ably. We had the arrests in London last week, and that was the result of cooperation between the United States, Britain, Pakistan. In addition, what you saw is the United States government -- for those of you who were traveling -- that within a very short period of time we sort of ironed out procedures at airports,

which is pretty miraculous. This is not the sort of thing that would have happened before September 11th.

And so I think what you're seeing is also some evidence of the very kinds of efforts that the President was being briefed on today, but also a reminder that the challenges are always there, that terrorists, in fact, are busy trying to do these -- are always trying to come up with innovative ways to murder innocent people. And the President is encouraging all of his people to think creatively so that we can try to prevent that.

Q: I think, to follow up on Steve's point, the argument is not that the war on terror would not exist if the U.S. was not pursuing a war in Iraq, it's that it's a drain on resources, not only in dollars, but also in the capacities that the government has.

MR. SNOW: Well, Michael Chertoff is not suiting up and going to Iraq. The fact is that you can have different departments and agencies doing this. This has been a war that has cost a lot of money -- \$250 billion or more. And we've lost a lot of American lives. But it does not mean that our government is incapable of doing this. And I think one thing that we have to combine is both optimism and determination. What I hear is, well, it's tough on the Pentagon, so therefore, the Department of Homeland Security or the Department of Justice or the Department of National Intelligence somehow are unable to do their jobs. What we saw in the briefings -- and, frankly, the State Department. What we saw in the briefings in the last two days is not only are they capable, but they are eager, because they share the same sort of passion for making sure this doesn't happen again.

I think what is lost in trying to reduce this to a balance sheet is the passion with which people approach this job. Anybody who was here on September 11th -- and that includes most of the people in this room -- know that the memories of that day may fade, but it doesn't take long for them to come flaring back, vividly. And each and every day, when people are taking a look at intelligence estimates, and when you get new terror reports, it's pretty obvious that there's a lot of work to be done. And the idea that somehow the men and women who are engaged in this on a daily basis are somehow distracted or don't have the resources -- don't tell that to them, because they certainly don't buy it.

Q: What do you think that the President's approval rating on his handling of terrorism are not higher?

MR. SNOW: That's a question for you guys. I think what's happened is, for instance, on the handling of terror, it went up 11 points in one weekend. Why did that happen? Because, two things, I think. Number one, people were reminded that the war on terror is real. I think for many people, terrorism is something that gets committed in Gaza -- our prayers go out to my friend, Steve Centanni, today on that front, and to his cameraman -- that the war on terror somehow exists 5,000, 10,000 miles away. Well, it doesn't. The war on terror also persists on a daily basis, and people are trying to do damage here. I think in our daily lives, we've thought, well, that's sort of passed. And last week was a reminder.

Now, I've got to say, a lot of the things that were discussed today are not done out in public. And perhaps if they were, the President's ratings would be a lot higher. Unfortunately, at the expense of the approval ratings would be our national security. A lot of the things that were discussed today simply are inappropriate to bring out in front of the public because they create a road map for terrorists to know what we're trying to do to interdict them.

So I think the President realizes -- and he's said it many times -- is that whatever approval ratings may have to say, he's got an obligation to protect the American people. And he's committed to it and he's determined to do it. And by the way, these were not grim, sober meetings. These were meetings where you had people who were energized, and the President asking very practical questions -- what works, what doesn't, where do you have roadblocks, how do you get past them. And it was more an expansive, sort of an extensive briefing about ongoing efforts, and at the same time, an effort to say, okay, we can do better, we can be more creative, we can be more nimble -- how do we do it? So I don't want to give you the sense that this was a grim meeting. It was anything but. As far as popularity ratings, again, his obligation is to save lives.

Q: Was the President told today in any of these meetings about a possible al Qaeda connection to the Britain plot?

MR. SNOW: Again, there's been a lot of discussion about al Qaeda, and what we have said and will continue is to say is until we've got firm proof and feel comfortable in announcing it, we're not going to do so. The characterizations in the past has been, it has the looks of al Qaeda, and I'm aware of reports from other governments that it's al Qaeda. But our intelligence at this point does not permit us to say with confidence that that was the case.

Q: Tony, you say it wasn't a grim meeting, but there are a lot of grim things happening in the world, and particularly the terrorism. Did he have a rather upbeat assessment of what's going on? Because when you think --

MR. SNOW: No, he's not Pollyanna-ish. I think what you see -- and it's a good question, I'm glad you asked it, Martha, because I don't want to give the impression that it's like, wow, this is great. Instead, you've got a President who realizes it's a big challenge. And he is somebody who is not frightened by the challenges, but motivated by them. And what you need to understand, to be effective in that you not only want to push your people, you want morale to be high, you want there to be an esprit de corps. And that's one of the reasons why there was so much discussion of how to make sure everybody is working together, that you do not have the Balkanization of departments and agencies where they're using incompatible software and they're not talking to one another and all that sort of thing. It is grim stuff, but it's also -- go back to what I said before -- determination and optimism; you have to be determined to win. And the tone of this is -- again, I'll steal a line from "Apollo 13" -- failure is not an option. So when you work on these problems you constantly are trying to get the most out of your people, and to ask pointed questions and to try to find a way forward. And that's really what the tone and tenor of the debate was today.

Q: Tony, isn't one of the reasons the poll numbers look bad is because Americans hear the administration say again and again, we've captured or killed two-thirds of the known leadership of al Qaeda, we've got them on the run, and, yet, a plot like this is uncovered?

MR. SNOW: Well -- no. I really am not going to sit here and do a seance about public opinion polls because I don't know. I don't think anybody knows. I think it's pretty -- when you're in a war like this, and especially with a vague and unseen enemy, you can understand that people are going to have anxiety. And one of the frustrations is you can't show everybody the kinds of things that are going on each and every day. But the fact is, just because you've degraded a lot of al Qaeda doesn't mean that you still don't have people who are committed to killing Americans. And that is an important ingredient.

Furthermore, as you know, Martha, there have been sort of al Qaeda "affiliated groups" that have been springing up across the world. The other thing -- go back to what the President was talking about on September 20, 2001, when he said -- he pointed out that this is not something that's restricted to the Pakistani tribal areas or to Waziristan, but it's spread across 50 countries all over the world. We have information being swapped by the Internet, and, in some cases, by pack mule. But you have all sorts of different ways of trying to transmit information and put together operational plans, and these are people who are deeply dedicated to what they want to do.

And the only way to do it is not only to win, in terms of thwarting their efforts, but also to set an example that provides hope so that the business of trying to recruit people to this sort of activity becomes increasingly difficult because there is hope not only in the form of democracy, but the ability to build good and independent lives.

Q: Tony, you said that this was a sort of free-wheeling discussion where everyone was questioned about what's working, what's not, what can we do better, what can we do differently. So, then, will we see any changes, any hard, any fast, concrete changes at the airports, the train stations, at the ports, soon, when? Or is this all just -- is this all strategy right now?

MR. SNOW: No, it's not all strategy, Kathleen. But a lot of the things that go on you don't see, including changes at airports and including changes at rail stations. I was asked by April yesterday, and I think Victoria also asked about rail stations. Well, we've spent \$330 million or more on rail improvements for security in the last three years, most of it unseen by people.

And I don't want to give the impression that this is free-wheeling. You had people giving very structured reports and the President was giving questions, the rest of us were sitting back and learning. So it wasn't sort of a dormitory rap session. This was a chance for the President to get detailed and organized briefings from key people involved in the war on terror.

Jim

Q: Tony, you said that they identified some key areas. What are the key areas where the U.S. does have to keep up on this?

MR. SNOW: And again, this is -- it gets back in -- and this is why I was being very general about this -- I can't tell you. I mean to say, we need to beef up this, is a way of saying to al Qaeda -- which, I'm sure, is watching -- "hey, go there" -- and I can't do it.

Q: How much beefing up is there that needs to be done? Is this a series issue? Are there -- you've got to plan -- is there tweaking that needs to be done?

MR. SNOW: I just -- I can't play with it. Let me put it this way: There are extensive and very impressive efforts going on to save American lives, but the idea that it would be responsible for me to get up and give you a characterization of where there is weakness or if we're tweaking or we're overhauling, I think is irresponsible.

I feel safe in saying that, again, you've got some very impressive, very determined efforts to try to make sure on every front that we are capable of bringing to the war on terror every conceivable and necessary tool so that we can protect the freedoms of Americans and also restrict the ability of terrorist groups to kill us.

Peter.

Q: Tony, former President Clinton told ABC News in an interview there this morning that, "While I don't think the foiling of that London bomb plot has any bearing on our Iraq policy, they seem anxious to tie to al Qaeda. If that's true, how come we've got seven times as many troops in Iraq as in Afghanistan? Why is the administration and congressional leadership consistently opposed to adequate checks on cargo containers in ports and airports? I think Republicans should be very careful in trying to play politics on the airport thing --

MR. SNOW: Can you hand me that quote when you're done, because I think this one needs some parsing. So you hand that to me, and we will deconstruct, all right? (Laughter.) You have it marked up for me?

Q: The bottom of the first --

MR. SNOW: Okay, "I don't think the foiling of the London bomb plot has any bearing on our Iraq policy." Fair enough. "They seem to be anxious to tie it to al Qaeda." I think Bill Plante will tell you that's not true.

Q: Well, I don't know that it's not true. I only know what you told me. (Laughter.)

MR. SNOW: Well, I'm telling you the truth. But the fact is, as a public matter, we haven't done it, which leads to a series, therefore, of non sequiturs that are tied to a fallacious premise. The fact is that --

Q: Oooh --

MR. SNOW: Well, it is. I'm sorry, but go take a logic class.

Q: We're in it. (Laughter.)

MR. SNOW: Exactly. (Laughter.) But I'll tell you what -- for instance, containers. There have been considerable efforts -- and the President continues and he was briefed on this today -- on ways to ensure container safety. The best way to ensure container safety is to ensure at the point of origin. And that's one of the things this government has been very busy doing, is trying to make sure containers, when they leave, are safe and, furthermore, that you have ways of tagging those containers to make sure that they haven't been tampered with on the journey.

So President Clinton, I know, is sort of committing some politics here and accusing Republicans in so doing. But I'll tell you what. I think in the same position he'd be looking at the same options. And I think he would be ordering his people to be every bit as nimble, too, because as a former President he knows how serious this is. And so I appreciate the comment, because it gave me an opportunity to read right off this here transcript -- (laughter.) All right, thank you. Well, I'll keep it as a treasured memento. But it's a bit beside the point.

Q: What about his point, though, that in devoting seven times as many troops to Iraq as in Afghanistan, we're not spending enough resources to go after al Qaeda, which is presumably in Afghanistan --

MR. SNOW: Well, among other things, he doesn't know what we're doing to go after al Qaeda. Period. He doesn't know. We're not broadcasting it. We're not going to tell anybody. The other thing is, President Clinton is probably aware of the fact that if you're going to fight an effective war on terror, you don't fight it alone. The Pakistanis have been very helpful on a number of occasions. And the notion that the United States, in and of itself, ought to be winning all the wars is something that we haven't tried to do. The President has assembled not only some of the largest coalitions ever in Iraq, in Afghanistan, but in the war on terror even larger coalitions trying to get people to work together so that the United States doesn't have to expend itself and extend itself everywhere.

So the fact is you have a government in Afghanistan that is standing up and trying to extend its control. And, also, if you take a look at the map of Afghanistan and the troops there, I believe we have nine different countries now that are contributing troops and working throughout the region. And that's a perfect example of the kind of phenomenon I'm talking about. One of the reasons we're doing it is we've got help in Afghanistan. One of reasons we remain committed in Iraq is that we, as the Iraqi people do, understand that there is an attempt there to foil democracy. You heard it a little bit today in some of the talk out of Tehran and also Damascus, where there was crowing about foiling what people were trying to do, which is create democracy. That is one of the reasons why Iraq remains absolutely fundamental, and we're committed to making sure that democracy succeeds.

Q: What's the President's current thinking on the idea being pushed by Senator Biden and others for a partition of Iraq into separate regions?

MR. SNOW: Doesn't buy it.

Q: Why not?

MR. SNOW: Because it's not practical. And, furthermore, if you've listened to what's -- who was it that wrote the op-ed, was it Maliki who wrote it over the weekend? One of the Iraqi officials, and I'm kicking myself now, wrote a pretty extensive explanation of why most Iraqis don't want it. It may provide kind of a nice construct -- break it apart, and then it won't be a problem.

The fact is, Iraqis really -- Iraqis look upon themselves not at -- at least, in all cases -- as Sunni, Shia and Kurd, but as Iraqis, as the descendants of a Mesopotamian civilization that has been around for a very

long time. And they see themselves as a nationality, rather than unmeltable ethnic groups. So it's important to try to go ahead and give them the ability to experience that nation --

Q: Can I follow up on one other question from yesterday? You've said a number of times within the last couple of days that there was no coordination with the Israelis. Why wouldn't there be coordination? I mean, this is a war on terrorism, right, and Hezbollah is --

MR. SNOW: It is a war on terror, but it's --

Q: -- you coordinate with Pakistan, so why not Israel?

MR. SNOW: Well, there's a difference. What you had is an attack on Israel, and Israel is engaged in a matter of self-defense. In the case of Pakistan, Pakistan had actionable intelligence about somebody who was working to fight the United States. They're entirely different kinds of situations.

Q: Tony, you mentioned briefly the statement of Bashir Assad, President Assad, and the Irani President. Can I press you on that, and the administration's reaction to especially President Assad saying that this was a loss for Israel and that it has essentially taken root in the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of Arabs that this resistance was a winner for Hezbollah?

MR. SNOW: Well, it's going to be interesting to see, and I've heard that Hezbollah is a winner trope, but on the other hand, I opened up The Washington Post today and there's a story about people making jokes at the expense of Hezbollah and Nasrallah.

What Hezbollah did is it brought bloodshed into Lebanon that did not need to be there, and the people of Lebanon, over time, are going to have to ask themselves, what good have they done us? For the notion that Hezbollah brings bread, it brings blood, as well.

The United States was the first nation to commit humanitarian resources, \$35 million; there's going to be more. It was the Israelis who opened up the humanitarian corridors. The Saudis have committed half-a-billion dollars to humanitarian relief and said that they're going to commit a billion dollars to reconstruction. You also have the fact that the Iraqis committed \$35 million.

So I know there's a war of words right now, but I think the most important thing is just for the people of Lebanon to ask themselves, how do we get our country back? Do you really get a country back if you have a militia -- Hezbollah -- financed by Iran and Syria, continuing to try to operate independently so they can place everybody's lives at risk? And one of the reasons I think the Syrian President may want to be claiming victory is that he knows that one of the things that's come out of this is a recognition in the region and in many parts of the world of what Hezbollah is really about.

And, by the way, Hezbollah also tipped its hand in terms of the kind of fortifications it has, the kinds of forces it has. Those sorts of things are no longer secrets. But, furthermore, people throughout the region now have to ask themselves, why are Syria and Iran so opposed, and openly opposed by their own admission today, to having democracy in Lebanon or, for that matter, in the Palestinian areas.

Q: To go back to al Qaeda for a second.

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: Do you think that -- is there a concern that al Qaeda is becoming more of a first-world phenomenon, if you will, and that our focus should be less on failed states and we should really be more concerned about what's going on in places like the U.K.?

MR. SNOW: I don't think you -- no, John, I don't think so. I think you remain concerned about everything. I think the moment you try to say, I'm not going to look here, especially if you make a public pronouncement, they're going to go there. I mean the one thing we've learned is that al Qaeda and also

terror cells are very -- they respond very quickly to changes, as well. That's one of the reasons why people on our side have to be very quick to react to changes.

And, yes, you'll look at some of the brewing problems in Europe. You'll look at the possibility of people trying to do homegrown terror here, and, at the same time, you look at failed states. If you take a look at a lot of the folks who have been arrested in recent years, they've been trained in terror camps in some of those failed states. So you need to deny them the ability to create significant operational capabilities. And failed states quite often provide them their real estate.

Goyal.

Q: Tony, quick two questions. One, as the global war on terrorism is concerned, the President has been speaking on doing it better, like yesterday and today. But my question is that, are these rogue nations are listening what he has been saying really for the last five years since 9/11 and now in recent days? And second, as far as this funding is concerned, many organizations are still raising funds in the name of earthquake victims and war victims and all that, and most of the money, according to WTOP News is going to fund the terrorists.

MR. SNOW: Well, first of all, thank WTOP for the insight. The fact is, as a matter of U.S. law, the moment we know that somebody is trying undercover to use a charity as a vehicle for financing terror, we shut it down. That's what the law permits us to do. So that's not unusual. And the fact is, we're not only saying things about terror, we're doing things about terror, and that's the most important part.

Q: How about the rogue nations --

MR. SNOW: What about the rogue nations that what?

Q: Rogue nations -- if they are still listening to the President's message against terrorism?

MR. SNOW: I don't -- it doesn't matter if they're listening. They need to know that we're not backing away from the fight.

Q: In response to Peter's question, he suggested that Iraqis tend to see themselves as Iraqis first and then Shiites and Sunnis. But one of the experts that met with the President yesterday said the exact opposite, that our policies have led to a Shiite ascendancy that can have long-term implications. Did they engage on that issue in their discussion?

MR. SNOW: Well, I'm not going to -- I'm not telling you about the discussions because one of the ground rules we have is that we're not going to characterize what goes on. But let me just say that what you've talked about is not inconsistent with the notion of still people being part of an Iranian [sic] nation. You can expect that there are going to be different groups vying for influence within Iraq. That's perfectly natural. And it's obviously one of the things that we look at. But the ground rules are, we let people talk freely and openly, and therefore, I don't want to get into characterizing the nature of the debate.

Q: Did the President hear from critics?

MR. SNOW: Yes, the President always does. And this is a point I've tried to make. These are not meetings where he comes in and gets cheerleaders. What he gets is smart people who look at issues at different angles and in different ways, because that's the only way -- just as he's trying to get his people to think creatively, he needs to think creatively, too. The only way you do that is bringing in all different points of view so that you're not simply looking at it from the standpoint of what policy papers may come your way. You need some new ways. And these have led to -- meetings like this have led to conversations with folks who have not always been congenial with administration policy, but have extensive experience in whatever region or whatever topic matter may be under discussion. And it's very useful for the President.

Q: They don't get Oval Office syndrome, pull their punches?

MR. SNOW: No, they really don't. I mean, you've been around the President. The President knows how to make people relax. And that's one of the things he does. He wants them to feel comfortable. And otherwise, it doesn't work.

Q: How will the government spend our money in Lebanon so that it doesn't end up in the hands of Hezbollah or end up as appearing that Hezbollah is actually succeeding in reconstruction of the country? How will Americans get credit for those tax dollars spent in Lebanon?

MR. SNOW: You know, I don't know tactically about what guidelines we're going to have on the expenditure of money, but I think it's pretty safe to say that we won't be handing checks to Nasrallah and say, here, go do good. So I think -- quite often what happens is that you've got NGOs and other organizations that are duly designated to distribute such aid, and we will work with recognizable organizations. We don't want to do a victory lap saying, look at us, we're committing humanitarian aid. What we want to do is to let the Lebanese people know that all over the world there are people rooting for them to succeed as a democracy.

Q: But, as you know, I work for an investment magazine, so I'm looking for the investment implications. Will we be giving money directly to U.S. contractors for projects --

MR. SNOW: I have no idea what the guidelines are. Just don't.

Q: Tony, has the President has anything to say about Senator Allen's remark about an Indian member of --

MR. SNOW: If he has, it has not been discussed. I gather Senator Allen has apologized for it.

Q: Last night, the Prime Minister of Japan visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Can you tell me if the President is concerned over the rising tensions in South Korea and China, or does he think they're overreacting?

MR. SNOW: The President is not going to get involved in any of that. What the President wants to do -- I mean, one of the things the President has worked consistently to do is to build a common sense of purpose, which is why you've had the six-party talks with regard to North Korea. You had the North Koreans, the Chinese, the South Koreans, the Russians, the Americans, all working together to try to figure out some way to have a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. And that will continue to be the case. The President, obviously, wants all parties to get along, but he is not going to get involved in -- embroiled in that dispute.

Q: On South Korea, South Korean President Roh mentioned South Korea wanted to conclude the transfer of wartime command and control. What is the United States' response on that? Also I have a --

MR. SNOW: We are aware of that, and we will cooperate.

Q: Tony, was there discussion today by the President or any of his advisors about legislative changes that might be needed? And does he feel that some of the pending counterterrorism legislation on the Hill such as the FISA law or the detainee treatment package will be in any way affected by the sort of reminder --

MR. SNOW: No, I don't think so, because you've got to keep in mind that the kind of reforms that are being discussed on Capitol Hill, including FISA reform and response to the Hamdan case and others, were done by an administration that thinks about this stuff every day, and that gets threat assessments regularly, and understands the nature of the enemy, and therefore, in this particular case, doesn't need an adjustment, but is concerned in working with members of Congress to make sure that we're able to get the intelligence.

Suppose you find somebody someplace, and you hear word, okay, they think that there's a plot that's going to happen in 24 hours, you need to find ways to protect lives, and you need to do it in a way that's consistent with our laws and traditions, and the President is eager to work with Congress on that.

So, no, actually, there was discussion about some of those reforms, but it was not, boy, we've got work to do. I think what the President and members of his team are eager to do is to work with Congress so that everybody -- and I think this is something that really isn't a partisan issue, or should not be, everybody wants to figure out the best way to keep us safe.

Sarah.

Q: Thank you. Tony, how does the President feel about the Pence-Hutchinson immigration reform proposal?

MR. SNOW: The President welcomes any attempts on the part of members of the House and Senate to work together to get a comprehensive immigration reform. He's not picking favorites. What he's trying to do is to get both sides to the point where they appoint conferees and get a bill done. That's what he wants. He wants comprehensive reform, and this is one of a number of proposals that are being knocked around on the Hill.

Q: George Will wrote this morning that the administration is so self-delusional that if it recognized that it needed to make -- or it became necessary to make a change in tactics, that it would not recognize it, and that perhaps Senator Kerry had the right formula back in the last election year. Would you like to reply to that?

MR. SNOW: It's the first time I think I've ever heard you cite George Will with approval. (Laughter.) No, look, the fact is, I've just talked to you about how nimble the administration is. One of the things you need in a time of war is a clear vision and a clear sense of determination. But one of the things the President has talked about at all junctures is being nimble in response to threats.

So George writes a wonderful column, a nice readable column -- but this administration -- I'm sorry, but the column doesn't resemble the administration for which I work.

Q: I don't understand why the President doesn't want to get involved in the defusing of tension between China and South Korea, on the one hand, and Japan on the other, over the visit to the shrine.

MR. SNOW: Because that's something they can do themselves.

Q: Tony, with all the talk today about counterterrorism and the President's visit to the center there today, I'm just trying to square that approach on actively engaging in the war on terror, and here you have a strong U.S. ally, Israel, come under attack from a terrorist organization, and the U.S. was all about diplomacy and settling that peacefully, as opposed to allowing them to engage in the war on terror. How does that square?

MR. SNOW: Well, wait a minute. The United States said that Israel had the right to defend itself. You're seeming to imply that the United States put up a big stop sign. The United States did nothing in terms of trying to -- again, Israel had its right to defend itself. Both of these efforts are designed to create peaceful ways to the future. If you interrupt a terror operation you're saving lives. If you're trying to find a diplomatic way out, you're trying to save lives. They both have that in common.

But also in common is the desire to foster democracy and foster democratic dreams. And, interestingly, the two are related, because to the extent that you can build a stable democracy in Lebanon, to the extent that you can build a democracy with the Palestinians, to the extent that you build a democracy with the Iraqis, you're sending a powerful message to the jihadis, or to the people that they would want to recruit, that there's a better way. And so the two are related in that sense.

But I think, otherwise -- I don't buy the analogy.

Q: The President had avoided being involved in the Connecticut primary prior to voters going to the polls. You've avoided taking any position --

MR. SNOW: You noticed?

Q: -- and the Vice President today said that "The Dean Democrats have defeated Joe Lieberman. Their choice instead is a candidate whose explicit goal is to give up the fight against the terrorists in Iraq." Why is the Vice President making such comments? And does he support Senator Lieberman's independence?

MR. SNOW: No. Number one, we are not making any endorsement in Connecticut. The Republican Party of Connecticut has suggested that we not make an endorsement in that race, and so we're not. We are certainly not going to be endorsing between Joe Lieberman and Ned Lamont because both of them are going to caucus as Democrats if they're elected to the United States Senate.

But as we were talking about last week, Ned Lamont ran on a campaign of getting out of Iraq, period; getting out. You have to ask yourself at a time of choosing what this does in the war on terror, what the consequences of that are going to be. Does this help the people of Iraq or does it create a power vacuum? Does it, in fact, support Osama bin Laden's comments -- and I want to thank one of your colleagues for setting me right on this; it was after Mogadishu, when we left Mogadishu -- that the Americans, you stay at them long enough, they're going to lose their will, they're going to walk away -- and he used that as inspiration to persuade people to conduct the September 11th attacks.

So it is important to understand what the consequences of an idea are. And I think the Vice President was well within his rights, and I think correct, in making that analysis and assessment. But in terms of the race, the Connecticut Republican Party has asked us to stand down on it, so we will.

Q: You don't find that a little odd?

MR. SNOW: Nope.

Q: Why not?

MR. SNOW: Well, there are times --

Q: -- I don't recall it ever happening, when the White House has been asked to stay out of Republican race.

MR. SNOW: No, actually, there have been races in the past where candidates didn't meet the expectations of the local parties and Presidents have stayed out, Democrats and Republicans, in the past.

Q: I'd like to see a list.

MR. SNOW: You know what? Perfect. We'll do the asterisk for you. (Laughter.)

Q: Tony, on your stop sign metaphor, isn't a cease-fire a stop sign?

MR. SNOW: A cease-fire is something -- it's a stop sign, but it's one with which the Israeli people agreed. The Israeli government and the Lebanese both were full participants and supporters of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. This was not done in a vacuum; it certainly was not done without collaboration or without discussion there.

I think it is important to note that while we were not involved in military discussions with the Israelis, we certainly were involved in diplomatic discussions -- the President having said as early as the day of the seizures that he was looking for a diplomatic way out; pushed it at the G8; pushed it in Rome; pushed it with the U.N. Security Council.

So, yes, that is a stop sign, but it's a stop sign that both parties are supposed to hold up and both parties are supposed to abide by.

Q: Thank you.

MR. SNOW: Thank you.

END 5:13 P.M. EDT

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